NATION

Platform collapse kills 7 at UP religious event

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BUSINESS

Nvidia loses $600B amid DeepSeek surge

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SPORTS

Kohli declines Delhi captaincy on Ranji return

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 29 JANUARY 2025 | WEDNESDAY | BENGALURU | 28 RAJAB, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 29 | Pages: 8

Jasprit Bumrah wins
SIR GARFIELD SOBERS AWARD
for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year

Highest-ever ICC Test bowling ranking
907 POINTS

Fastest Indian pacer to take
200 TEST WICKETS
with a sub-20 average.

PLAYER OF THE TOURNAMENT
at T20 World Cup 2024.

2024 STATS:

15 WICKETS
in T20 World Cup at an average of 8.26.

Economy rate: **4.17**

>>>More on Page 8

India summons SL envoy after Navy fires at 5 fishers

India says 'use of force not acceptable' in any circumstances

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Five Indian fishermen sustained injuries, including two seriously, in an incident of firing by the Sri Lankan Navy in the proximity of Delft Island early Tuesday, triggering a strong reaction by India.

The acting high commissioner of the island nation in New Delhi was summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and a strong protest was lodged with the top diplomat.

In its reaction, India said use of force is not "acceptable" under any circumstances whatsoever.

"An incident of firing by the Sri Lankan Navy during the apprehension of 13 Indian fishermen in the proximity of Delft Island was reported in the early hours of this morning," it said.

"Out of the 13 fishermen who were on board the fishing vessel, two have sustained serious injuries and are currently receiving treatment at the Jaffna Teaching hospital," it said.

Three other fishermen received minor injuries and have been treated for the same, it added.

Indian Consulate officials in Jaffna have visited the injured fishermen at the hospital to seek their welfare and are extending all possible assistance to the fishermen and their families.

The Indian high commission in Colombo has also raised the matter with the Sri Lankan foreign ministry.

"The government of India has always emphasised the need to treat issues pertaining to fishermen in a humane and humanitarian manner, keeping in mind livelihood concerns," the Indian readout noted.

"The use of force is not acceptable under any circumstances whatsoever. Existing understandings between the two governments in this regard must be strictly observed," MEA said. *—PTI*

Family members mourn after the Sri Lankan navy arrested 13 fishermen for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary, in Puducherry, on Tuesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

MODI TO VISIT US IN FEB

'Modi will do what is right for immigrants'

WASHINGTON, 28 JAN

US President Donald Trump has said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will do "what is right" on illegal immigrants, underlining that discussions are going on with India.

President Trump made these remarks on Monday while talking to reporters aboard Air Force One on his way back to Joint Base Andrews from Florida. He also mentioned that Prime Minister Modi is likely to visit the White House in February.

Separately, in a readout of a phone call between both leaders, the White House said that Trump had a "productive" phone call with Modi and sought a move towards a "fair" bilateral trading relationship and deeper India-US cooperation.

Trump said that the US would impose tariffs on the countries that "harm" America as he named China, India and Brazil as high-tariff countries.

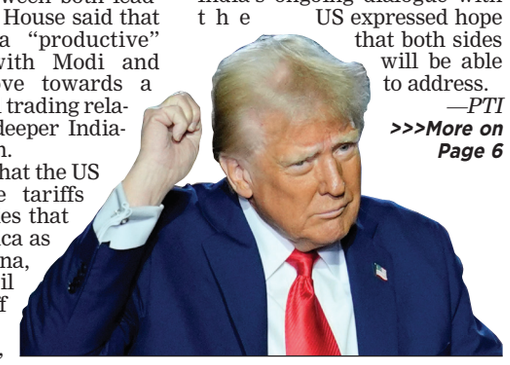
Meanwhile, during their phone call, the two leaders also discussed plans for Modi to visit the US, the White House said in the readout.

"He (Modi) will do what's right. We are discussing," said the president.

The prime minister's trip to the US, the first under Trump 2.0 was finalised during the call. Trump's last foreign trip as president was to India during his first term.

Speaking during a weekly press briefing, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal referred to India's ongoing dialogue with the US expressed hope that both sides will be able to address. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6



White House freezes all federal grants and loans

WASHINGTON, 28 JAN

The White House is pausing federal grants and loans starting on Tuesday as President Donald Trump's administration begins an across-the-board ideological review of its spending. The funding freeze by the Republican administration could affect trillions of dollars and cause widespread disruption in health care research, education programs and other initiatives. The pause takes effect at 5.00pm ET and it's unclear how sweeping it will be. The memo released from the acting director of the Office of Management and Budget said all spending must comply with Trump's executive order. Medicare and Social Security benefits will be unaffected. *—PTI*

Budget Session begins on 31 Jan with Prez's address

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will take up discussion on President Droupadi Murmu's address to Parliament on Monday as the Budget Session begins on 31 January. The President will address both the Houses of Parliament assembled together in the Lok Sabha chamber on Friday and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the General Budget on Saturday. The Finance Minister will table the Economic Survey on Friday when both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will convene briefly after the President's address. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to reply to debate in Rajya Sabha on 6 February. *—PTI*

Anganwadi workers back on strike

Freedom Park became the epicentre of a massive protest on Tuesday, as thousands of Anganwadi workers and helpers from across the State gathered to voice their grievances. **Hameed Ashraf** reports.

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PM Narendra Modi with Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami during opening ceremony of 38th National Games in Dehradun ***PHOTO: PTI***

OPENING CEREMONY OF 38TH NATIONAL GAMES KICKS OFF

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 38th National Games in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, marking the beginning of India's premier multi-sport event.

LOCATION Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

DURATION 28 January – 14 February.

TOTAL ATHLETES 10,000.

MEDALS AT STAKE: 450 gold, silver, and bronze medals.

NOTABLE PARTICIPANTS: Lovlina Borgahain, Lakshya Sen, and Swapnil Kusale.

DEMONSTRATION SPORTS: Kalarippayattu, Yogasana, Mallakhambh, and Rafting.

THEME: 'Green Games promoting eco-friendly and sustainable practices.

>>>More on Page 8

Prove Yamuna is poisoned: EC tells Kejri

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Election Commission on Tuesday sought factual evidence from AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal to substantiate his allegation that neighbouring Haryana is poisoning the Yamuna river, as it reminded him of legal provisions that can lead to up to three years' imprisonment for "mischievous" statements against national integration and public harmony.

EC also asked Kejriwal to share details of his claim that engineers of Delhi Jal Board had actually detected and prevented it on time. *—PTI*

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Rahul flays 'liquor scam kingpins' Kejri & Sisodia

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi launched a fierce critique of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his party, AAP during a public rally in Patparganj ahead of the 5 February assembly polls. Gandhi accused Kejriwal of hypocrisy, noting that while he promised clean politics, the largest "liquor scam" in Delhi occurred under his administration. He referred to both Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia as "architects of the liquor scam" and urged voters to support Congress.

NAMMA METRO FARE HIKE ON HOLD

BENGALURU 28 JAN

In a relief to commuters, the proposed 45 per cent hike in Namma Metro ticket prices may not take place this year.

Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) had planned to implement the fare increase from 1 February, 2025, citing rising operational costs. However, as per the sources, the Central government is yet to approve it. The last fare revision for Namma Metro was in 2017, with current fares ranging from Rs 10 to Rs 60. BMRCL had proposed the fare hike as a means to cover high operational expenses, but the move has faced opposition from various quarters, including the employees of Namma Metro.

The Namma Metro Employees Association has raised concerns over the fare increase, suggesting instead that funds be better managed to boost revenue without burdening commuters. . *—Salar News*

Delhi riot accused gets 6-day parole for poll campaign

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Supreme Court on Tuesday granted six-day custody parole to former AAP councillor and February 2020 riots accused Tahir Hussain, who is contesting on a AIMIM ticket, to campaign for Delhi assembly polls.

Custody parole entails a prisoner being escorted by armed police personnel to the place of visit.

A full bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath, Sanjay Karol and Sandeep Mehta allowed Hussain's plea to campaign in police custody from 29 January to 3 February.

The court said he would only be allowed to leave jail along with security for 12 hours, according to the jail manual.

The top court said the former councillor could walk out of jail at around 6 am and return by 6 pm.

The bench said Hussain's custody parole would be subject to the deposit of Rs 2.47 lakh per day as part of security expenses, including the police escort. *—PTI*

MILK SUPPLY TO BE HIT

KMF workers to go on strike from 1 Feb

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Workers of the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) have announced an indefinite strike beginning on 1 February, in protest of wage discrimination and the delayed implementation of the 7th Pay Commission recommendations.

The strike, which will halt milk supply operations across the State, is expected to severely impact Karnataka's dairy industry, a crucial part of the State's rural economy.

The workers allege that despite assurances, the delay in implementing the recommendations is due to technical obstacles, with no financial burden on dairy unions. A union spokesperson emphasised, "The strike is unavoidable as our rightful demands remain unmet."

Karnataka's dairy industry plays a vital role in sustaining rural livelihoods, with millions of litres of milk produced, stored, and distributed daily.

A prolonged disruption in supply could lead to a severe crisis, causing significant distress to both consumers and farmers.

While KMF has achieved a 10 per cent increase in turnover in recent years and has kept administrative expenses to just 2 per cent, the employees' association is dissatisfied with the lack of response from the Cooperative Department regarding their request to raise annual expenses from 4 per cent to 5 per cent to account for rising costs.

The employees' association has been seeking a resolution for several months, but with no action taken, the strike has become inevitable. Union leaders have warned that the strike will continue until their demands for wage revisions are addressed. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: X

- The workers allege that despite assurances, the delay in implementing the recommendations is due to technical obstacles, with no financial burden on dairy unions

Telangana HC restricts theatre timings for minors

TELANGANA, 28 JAN

PHOTO: TSHC.GOV.IN

Telangana High Court has issued a directive prohibiting children under the age of 16 from attending early morning and late-night movie shows, on Monday. Justice B Vijaysen Reddy ordered that children should not be allowed in cinemas before 11am and after 11pm, following concerns over safety after a tragic incident.

The ruling came as part of the ongoing hearing of four petitions related to early and late-hour shows, as well as concerns over ticket price hikes. The petitions were filed after a stampede during the premiere of 'Pushpa 2: The Rule' at Sandhya Theatre, which led to the death of a 35-year-old woman and left an 8-year-old child with severe brain damage.

In compliance with a prior court order, the state government had already prohibited benefit shows and odd-hour screenings between 1am and 8am. The court cited the AP Cinema (Regulations) Rules, 1970, which restrict cinema screenings before 8.40am and after 1.30am.

The court has instructed the Home Department's Principal Secretary to consult stakeholders and take the necessary steps to regulate the entry of children under 16 into theatres and multiplexes, ensuring their safety during cinema screenings. *—Agencies*

Denied basic wages, Anganwadi workers go on indefinite protest

10,000 workers are protesting in Freedom Park seeking govt worker status

HAMEED ASHRAF
BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Freedom Park became the epicentre of a massive protest on Tuesday, as thousands of Anganwadi workers and helpers from across the State gathered to voice their grievances. In an indefinite protest, 'Bengaluru Chalo', the workers are demanding the implementation of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme and fair wages for their services.

They are also asking for recognition as government employees, access to healthcare and pensions, and relief from additional departmental work.

"My house rent is Rs 6,000 and my husband earns Rs 10,000 as a labourer. With our children's school fees, it is impossible to survive on my Rs 6,500 honorarium," Bhagyamma, an Anganwadi helper from Tumakuru **told Salar News**.

The Anganwadi workers are prepared to bear the scorching sun and biting cold of the City. While the association has taken care of their food, many workers are concerned as the 22-acre Freedom Park has only nine toilets in usable condition, out of ten. Anganwadi workers and their helpers are typically women from poor families. The government offers essential services such as supplementary nutrition, preschool education and healthcare to children under six, as well as pregnant and lactating mothers across the State, through Anganwadi centres. Despite their pivotal role in implementing these government initiatives, Anganwadi workers and helpers receive minimal pay, Rs 11,500 and Rs 6,500, often labelled as an "honorarium" rather than a salary.

Anganwadi workers protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

"We need to be recognised as C and D grade employees, like in Gujarat, and receive at least Rs 25,000 for workers and Rs 12,000 for helpers," said D Prema, State President of the Anganwadi Workers' Association. "We will continue our protest until the government accepts our demands. At least 10,000 workers will join us by the end of the day," she added. Many workers criticised the dual burden placed upon them. "Apart from our regular duties, we are tasked with implementing schemes such as Matru Purna and Matru Vandana. The government treats us as free labour," said Sushilamma, a worker with 40 years of experience in Dakshina Kannada. Others like Shivaleela from Kadaba taluk recounted their sacrifices during the Covid-19 pandemic. "We worked tirelessly, even when unwell, and some of our colleagues lost their lives to the virus," she said.

According to the Women and Child Development Ministry, the State has 61,876 Anganwadi workers, of which 15,000 have completed PU-II, 6,363 are degree holders, and 1,682 have postgraduate qualifications. Despite this, they remain underpaid and overworked.

As Women and Child Development Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar is still recovering from injuries she suffered in a car accident near Ambadgatti on 14 January, a representative from the Ministry arrived at the Freedom Park and assured them that their proposal would be taken up. However, workers were sceptical. "We need action, not just assurances," said district president Tara Ballal. The Anganwadi workers had held a similar protest in 2023 January and withdrew after 10 days following a promise from the then minister Halappa Achar. In December 2023, the wages of Anganwadi workers and helpers with more than ten years of service were increased by Rs 1,000. Those who had fewer years of service received a hike of Rs 500. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

SC allows B'luru Bar Association to create new posts

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

The Supreme Court has modified its earlier directive, allowing the Advocate Association of Bengaluru (AAB) to create a vice-president position ahead of upcoming elections. A bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh passed this order in response to intervention applications from association lawyers.

This decision follows a previous ruling on 24 January, which set aside the post of treasurer exclusively for women after nominations had already been submitted, including those from male candidates. The court has now granted male nominees the option to either withdraw or contest for other available positions.

In a motion to increase female representation within the AAB, the court has further mandated that 30 per cent of seats on the governing council be reserved for women. The election process is imminent: nomination papers must be submitted within a week, with voting set to occur in three weeks.

The Supreme Court has stressed the importance of adhering to any eligibility criteria previously established in the AAB's regulations. This ruling is part of the court's broader effort to enforce gender reservations in legal associations, reflecting its 24 January observation about the urgent need for women's representation in such bodies.

Over the last several months, the Supreme Court has consistently upheld provisions for women in various legal associations, including recent directives for similar reservations in the Delhi Sales Tax Bar Association and the National Green Tribunal Bar Association. *—PTI*

B'luru customs destroys seized drugs worth ₹36 cr

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Bengaluru Customs officials, in collaboration with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), destroyed 11.997 kg of narcotics worth Rs 36.08 crore as part of a Drug Disposal Campaign. The drugs, including cocaine, MDMA, and ganja, were incinerated at a secure location in the city. The destruction was carried out in compliance with the Drug Law Enforcement Handbook and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. Prior to incineration, approval was obtained from a Magistrate, and the disposal was conducted with consent from the State Pollution Control Board. The seized drugs had been securely stored in warehouses under 24/7 surveillance, with regular checks before their destruction. *—Salar News*

2 Tumakuru oil factory workers killed in boiler blast

TUMAKURU, 28 JAN

Two workers died after a boiler at a rice bran oil factory in Antharasanahalli industrial area allegedly exploded on Tuesday, police said. The deceased have been identified as Chandan Sharma, 24 and Santosh, 27, from Bihar, they said. According to police, the blast occurred at around 5.30pm. One of the boilers at the rice bran oil factory exploded, causing the victims to fall from a height, which led to their death. A case under the relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered and the matter is being investigated, police said. *—PTI*

Honey bees attack man chasing monkeys, dies

BIDAR, 28 JAN

A tragic incident occurred in Basava Kalyan, Bidar district, when 42-year-old Yuvaraj Nagashetti Biradar fell to his death while attempting to disperse monkeys from a tree. Working as an accounts clerk at Gadigoundwad PKPS, Yuvaraj had accompanied his father and brother to their agricultural field on Tuesday morning. To drive the monkeys away, he set fire to tree leaves, creating smoke. While climbing the tree, he fell into the burning area and suffered fatal head and burn injuries after being attacked by honey bees. Despite efforts to rush him to Basavakalyan Government Hospital, he succumbed to his injuries en route. *—Salar News*

Hike in water tariff inevitable: DKS

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday said raising the water tariff in Bengaluru has become unavoidable as the water board is facing an annual loss of Rs 1,000 crore.

He told reporters that he has directed officials to prepare a report on the proposed water tariff increase.

"I have asked officials to submit a report on the water tariff hike, a decision will be taken soon. We are also taking steps to measure water consumption accurately," said the Deputy CM, after a meeting with the officials of the Bengaluru civic agencies at Cauvery Bhavan.

He pointed out that the water tariff has not been increased since 2014, leading to an annual loss of Rs 1,000 crore for the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB).

- He pointed out that the water tariff has not been increased since 2014, leading to an annual loss of Rs 1,000 crore for the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB).

"The electricity bill for the Board has increased from Rs 35 crore to Rs 75 crore."

To a query on the quantum of the water tariff hike, he stated that no decision has been made yet, and it will be determined after thorough discussions.

He emphasised that even the poor should contribute a token amount, such as one paise per liter, to help the Board accurately measure water usage.

The Minister also recalled that the previous Congress government had allocated Rs 20 crore to provide water to slums and the urban poor, but the BJP government halted the initiative. *—PTI*

CM addresses SC/ST issues at key meeting

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday highlighted key issues, including the conviction rate in SC/ST cases, reservation backlogs, and the alleged MUDA scam, during a Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) Awareness Committee meeting.

He also addressed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) notice sent to his wife, terming it "politically driven".

Addressing the media, the Chief Minister said, "Today, in the meeting of the SC and ST Awareness Committee, we discussed several issues. Most importantly, the conviction rate which was previously 10 per cent has now dropped to 7 per cent. I have stated that it must increase to at least 10 percent, and for this, the police must hold meetings. District Commissioners (DCs) must hold meetings once every three months, conduct reviews, and take action wherever necessary," He further stated that another meeting would be held to discuss reservations and backlogs. *—ANI*

PHOTO: ANI

'Cigarettes After Sex' cancels B'luru show

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

American alternative rock band Cigarettes After Sex cancelled their Bengaluru performance just 20 minutes before gates were scheduled to open due to technical difficulties. The gig was the final concert on the Indian wing of their tour.

The band took to Instagram to apologise to fans. ''We're heartbroken to announce that due to technical difficulties at the venue and beyond our control, we're unable to perform and unfortunately have to cancel tonight's show in Bengaluru. We're so incredibly sorry we can't see you all tonight and truly tried everything we could to make it happen. BookMyShow will reach out to you with information on refunds for the show as well. love you so much...''

All ticket holders will receive a full refund within 8-10 working days for the show, produced by Laqshya Media Group and curated by BookMyShow Live. The band was scheduled to perform at Bhartiya Mall of Bengaluru at 8pm. The band performed in Gurugram and Mumbai earlier this month. *—Salar News*

Rlys get ₹40cr to stop man-elephant conflict

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre on Tuesday announced the allocation of Rs 40 crore for the construction of a 26km railway barricade to address elephant menace in Ramanagara district.

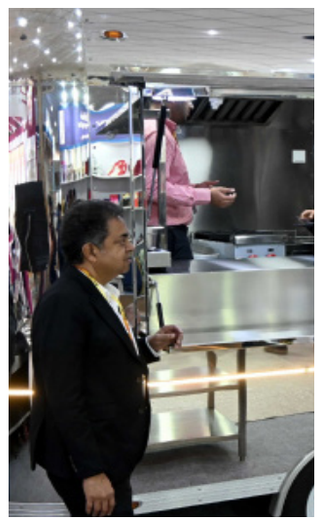
Khandre also expressed concerns over elephants entering human settlements and causing crop damage and loss of life. "Therefore, priority is being given to the construction of railway barricades," he said during a high-level meeting held at the Ramanagara District Commissioner's office.

According to the statement, the district has 85 areas with high elephant conflict, 45 with moderate conflict and 40 with low conflict. To address this, Khandre directed officials to implement a 24-hour alert system to notify villagers whenever elephants approach human settlements.

Kalaburagi gets 4 agri drone spraying units

Minister for Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and IT&BT Priyank Kharge on Tuesday said the government has set up the first four agriculture drone spraying centres in Kalaburagi district. Kharge posted on his official X handle on Tuesday that these centres have been established at the hobli level in Revoor B, Udagi, Nalwar and Kamlapur. *—PTI*

FOOD EXPO IN CITY



Machinery used in the food industry for baking and coffee making was displayed during the Food Business/ Manufacturing, Bakery, and Café Industries Expo at City's Palace Grounds on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

IN KORAMANGALA

Citizens urge BBMP to transplant 157 trees instead of chopping them

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Bengaluru Political Action Committee (B.PAC), a non-partisan citizen's group, has urged Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) on Tuesday to consider transplanting trees in Koramangala, instead of felling them, to facilitate the completion of the Ejipura flyover.

On 21 January, BBMP issued a public notice stating that the Executive Engineer of the Ejipura flyover project had submitted an application for the removal of 157 trees standing along Koramangala 100 feet Road to construct flyover ramps and service roads on both sides.

Taking to 'X', B PAC has suggested that if they can be, trees should be transplanted as City is getting hotter and water deficient every summer along with rising air pollution.

Taking to 'X', B PAC has suggested that if they can be, trees should be transplanted as City is getting hotter **PHOTO: @INDEXKARNATAKA**

Some of the trees identified are over 6m tall, according to the list issued by BBMP. While the list contains a good number of Ficus Benjamina, Rain tree, Mahogany and Indian Cork tree, it also includes Banyan trees and other local species like 'Gobbara Mara'.

The citizen body also suggested that for every tree that has to be cut, BBMP must prepare details of location for plantation of 10 saplings in its stead, as well as their care and monitoring routine. *—PTI*

YADUVEER DEFENDS ROYAL FAMILIES, FLAYS RAGA

KODAGU, 28 JAN

BJP Member of Parliament from Mysore-Kodagu, Yaduveer Wadiyar, expressed his disappointment over recent remarks of Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi dismissing the contributions of India's royal families.

Taking to social media website X, he noted the Wadiyars' historic role in progressive leadership, including their establishment of the University of Mysore in 1916, championing women's education, abolishing child marriage, and pioneering industrial and infrastructure projects, such as Asia's first hydroelectric power station at Shivanasamudra.

Rahul, on Monday while addressing a public gathering r in Mhow had said, "Before the constitution and the independence, the poor, Dalits, the backward classes, the Adivasis, had no rights in this country. Only the 'Rajas and Maharajas' had rights." *—PTI*

City microfinance firms warned against harassment

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

The City police are set to take stringent action against microfinance companies involved in harassing borrowers, following the introduction of new guidelines aimed at addressing such practices.

At a recent conference, Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda announced that the guidelines would be enforced after a high-level meeting with senior officials, including the Karnataka Director General of Police and Inspector General of Police.

B Dayananda **PHOTO: ANI**

The initiative follows disturbing reports of borrowers being forced to leave their homes due to threats and harassment, with some even resorting to suicide. In response, senior officers have directed jurisdictional police to take swift action against any companies found guilty of such behaviour.

Key measures outlined in the new guidelines include prohibiting microfinance companies from writing on borrowers' walls or damaging their reputations. The police will also target firms and individuals using illegal methods to intimidate borrowers. Legal action will be taken against any company found operating unlawfully or violating established regulations. Additionally, police officers are required to respond promptly to borrowers who report harassment. A list of companies violating Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines will be compiled, and steps will be taken to address these violations. The police will also hold meetings with microfinance company heads to discuss the issues and seek their cooperation in eliminating illegal practices. The State has instructed the police to take action against microfinance companies that engage in loan recovery practices contrary to RBI norms. *—Salar News*

Delhi court junks defamation case against Atishi

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

The allegations made by Atishi constitute the exercise of the right to freedom of speech concerning political corruption and do not constitute defamation, a Delhi court on Tuesday said and dismissed a BJP leader's plea against Chief Minister Atishi. Special judge Vishal Gogne said, "The allegations made by Atishi were infact in the nature of specific information regarding a possible criminal offence having been committed with the proposed use of large sums of money by a party with more against a party with less." The order came on an appeal filed by the AAP leader against an order of a magisterial court, which issued summons to Atishi on the complaint of Praveen Shankar Kapoor, former media head and spokesperson of the Delhi BJP unit." *—PTI*

JPC accepted our suggestions on Waqf Bill: JDU

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

The Janata Dal (United) has announced that its proposed amendments to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill have been accepted by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) currently reviewing the legislation, while accusing opposition parties of politicising the matter. BJP allies, including the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), JD(U), and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), have converged to support the bill with modifications discussed in a committee meeting on Monday. Previously, these parties had hesitated to fully endorse the bill during its initial presentation in Parliament last year, advocating instead for broader consultations to address concerns from the Muslim community. JD(U) spokesperson Ranjan Prasad stated, "All that we suggested has been accepted. We have no complaints regarding the JPC's functioning. Opposition habitually politicises every issue." *—PTI*

WEF:T'gana gets ₹1.80 lakh crore investments

HYDERABAD, 28 JAN

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy announced that the state has attracted investments totalling approximately Rs 1.8 lakh crore during his recent visit to the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos. He hailed this as a major achievement for his government, countering claims by the opposition BRS that the administration was unable to secure such investments. Reddy said that global companies were drawn to Telangana due to the government's focused policies and strategic planning. During the summit, the 'TelanganaRising' delegation signed 20 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), predominantly for data centres and pumped storage facilities in the state. *—PTI*

Search operations underway across Jammu

JAMMU, 28 JAN

In response to a surge in terrorist activities, security forces have initiated a significant search operation at nearly two dozen locations, primarily in the higher altitudes and forested areas along the Line of Control. The operation targets regions affected by multiple attacks last year, which resulted in the deaths of 44 individuals, including 18 security personnel and 13 terrorists. The search covers 23 locations: the most extensive efforts are in the Chenab Valley districts, while operations are also underway in Rajouri, Poonch, and Udhampur. Security officials aim to thwart terrorist operations and prevent Pakistan-based handlers from escalating violence in the Jammu region, particularly ahead of the summer months. Last year, significant fatalities included 14 civilians, seven of whom were pilgrims, in various attacks across the region. *—PTI*

Prove claims on Yamuna river poisoning: EC to Kejri

Kejriwal says Haryana is engaged in biological warfare

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

The Election Commission on Tuesday sought factual evidence from AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal to substantiate his allegation that neighbouring Haryana is poisoning the Yamuna river, as it reminded him of legal provisions that can lead to up to three years' imprisonment for "mischievous" statements against national integration and public harmony. Kejriwal had accused Haryana government of engaging in "biological warfare," alleging, "Poison is being mixed into the Yamuna to render its water untreatable.

In a letter to Kejriwal, the Election Commission (EC) sought by 8 pm on Wednesday the nature and extent of the chemicals used for "poisoning" the Yamuna which could have kill people in large numbers, as claimed by the AAP chief.

BJP workers stage a protest against AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, in Gurugram, on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

BJP richest party with Rs 7113-cr fund balance

BJP has a whopping cash and bank balance of Rs 7,113.80 crore against opposition Congress party's Rs 857.15 crore as on 31 March, 2024, according to figures provided to the Election Commission. BJP spent as much as 1,754.06 crore during 2023-24 when Lok Sabha elections were announced, a whopping 60 per cent rise than Rs 1,092 crore spent in 2022-23.

Congress spent as much as Rs 619.67 crore during 2023-24, against Rs 192.56 crore in 2022-23. *—PTI*

> **Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray won't campaign for Congress or AAP in the Delhi Assembly polls. We are not going anywhere (for campaigning). We are neutral**
>
> -Sanjay Raut, Rajya Sabha MP

Scindia slams RaGa for 'maharajas' remark

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia's criticism of Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi over his "only maharajas enjoyed rights" remark evoked a strong response from the Congress on Tuesday as it said the Union minister may have forgotten the royal families' love for the British, "but we cannot forget".

Addressing a rally in Mhow on Monday, Gandhi said Dalits, backwards and tribals had no rights before independence, when "only maharajas and rajas enjoyed rights".

"The change was brought with independence. You got land and rights. BJP-RSS wants an India of pre-independence, where common people had no rights and only the likes of Adani and Ambani had rights. They want the poor to suffer in silence and not dream while the country is run by billionaires," he had said. "In his hunger for power and position, he has forgotten that these royal families had laid the foundation of equality and inclusive development in India years ago," Scinida said in his post on X on Monday night.

"He has forgotten that: Baroda Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad had provided financial assistance to our Constitution maker Baba Saheb Ambedkar to get education. Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj had laid the foundation of social justice in 1902 by giving 50 percent reservation to the Bahujans of the country in his governance for the first time," Scindia said. *—PTI*

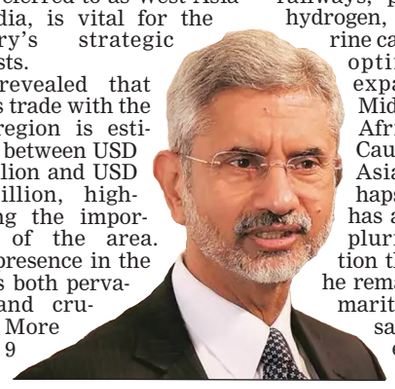
BUILDING COOPERATION

India sees Middle East as key passage to the world: EAM

ABU DHABI, 28 JAN

India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, addressed the significant growth of India-Middle East relations over the past decade, attributing it to robust trade, enhanced connectivity, and strong people-to-people ties. Speaking at the inaugural session of the Raisina Middle East conference, Jaishankar emphasised that the Middle East, referred to as West Asia by India, is vital for the country's strategic interests.

He revealed that India's trade with the Gulf region is estimated between USD 160 billion and USD 180 billion, highlighting the importance of the area. "Our presence in the Gulf is both pervasive and crucial. More than 9 million Indians live and work here, and the Gulf acts as a gateway to the MENA region and the Mediterranean," he stated. Moreover, he noted that India's annual trade with the Mediterranean reaches an additional USD 80 billion, with approximately half a million members of the Indian diaspora residing in that region. Current Indian projects in the Middle East span various sectors, including airports, ports, railways, phosphates, green hydrogen, steel, and submarine cables. He expressed optimism about expanding India-Middle East ties into Africa, Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. "There is perhaps no domain that has a stronger case for plurilateral cooperation than connectivity," he remarked, adding that maritime security and safety also require enhanced collaboration. *—PTI*



China-India discuss resuming ties amid differences

BEIJING, 28 JAN

In a significant development, China emphasised the importance of managing differences while promoting stable relations during talks with Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri. The discussions, which took place in Beijing, aimed to revitalise India-China relations, which have been strained for over four years due to tensions in Eastern Ladakh.

Misri, a former ambassador to Beijing, met with Chinese Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, also a former envoy to New Delhi. Both sides reviewed bilateral relations and agreed to implement people-centric initiatives to restore ties.

According to a statement from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the conversation centred around the consensus reached during last year's BRICS summit, which highlighted the resumption of direct flights, the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra for Indian pilgrims, and discussions on sharing hydrological data concerning trans-border rivers.

The two nations reiterated the importance of dialogue and cooperation, aiming to foster trust and resolve misunderstandings. Additionally, Misri expressed India's support for China's leadership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the commitment to celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations. Steps to facilitate personnel exchanges and resume journalist operations were also agreed upon, indicating a potential thaw in relations. *—PTI*

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing *PHOTO: PTI*

- The two nations reiterated the importance of dialogue and cooperation, aiming to foster trust and resolve misunderstandings

WILL END FAST ONLY AFTER DEMANDS ARE MET: DALLEWAL

CHANDIGARH, 28 JAN

Leading Punjab farmer activist Jagjit Singh Dallewal confirmed his fast-unto-death will continue until the Indian government addresses farmers' demands, notably a legal guarantee for the minimum support price (MSP) for crops. Speaking at the Khanauri protest site, Dallewal emphasised the necessity of MSP, particularly for Punjab, to protect the region's depleting groundwater levels.

Despite being invited to a meeting with a high-level delegation from the central government, slated for 14 February in Chandigarh, Dallewal has opted to take medical aid while still refusing to end his fast. He has been on hunger strike since 26 November advocating for several concessions, including legal protections for crop pricing. Dallewal expressed gratitude for the ongoing support from fellow farmers and labourers and mentioned that following encouragement from both the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, he has sought medical assistance to address his deteriorating health. *—PTI*

UCC has same team spirit as sports: PM

DEHRADUN, 28 JAN

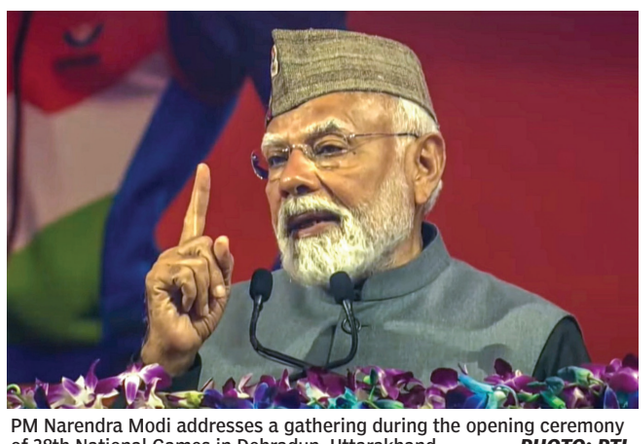
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which was implemented in Uttarakhand a day ago, has the same team spirit as sports and discrimination against none.

"It will strengthen the spirit of democracy and the Constitution," he said.

Speaking at the inauguration of the National Games at the Rajiv Gandhi international cricket stadium here, he congratulated the Uttarakhand government for implementing the UCC and described it as a "historic step". "Today the world is saying that the 21st century is India's century. After offering prayers to Baba Kedar, it came out from my mouth that this is the decade of Uttarakhand. I am very happy that Uttarakhand is developing rapidly," he said.

Uttarakhand on Monday became the first state in independent India to implement the law. The UCC gives priority to protection of personal rights and regulates the laws on marriage, divorce, inheritance, and live-in relationships, among others in the state.

UCC 2024, which applies to all residents of the state irrespective of their religion, also bans polygamy and child marriage.The Act, however, does not apply to the Scheduled Tribes notified under Articles 342 and 366 (25) of the Constitution and persons and communities protected under Part XXI. *—PTI*



PM Narendra Modi addresses a gathering during the opening ceremony of 38th National Games in Dehradun, Uttarakhand *PHOTO: PTI*

Priyanka faces black flag protests by CPI(M) in Wayanad

WAYANAD, 28 JAN

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra faced protests from CPI(M) workers today as she visited the family of Radha, a woman killed by a tiger last week in Mananthavady village. Black flags were waved and shouts of "go back" echoed as her motorcade passed near Kaniyaram. Critics highlighted her delayed response to the tragedy despite winning the constituency.

Radha was attacked by a tiger while collecting coffee beans at the Priyadarshini Estate on 24 January. The tiger, found dead in Wayanad on Monday, had the victim's hair, clothing, and earrings in its stomach, according to an autopsy.

Amid these events, the opposition Congress party condemned the Left government for being "indifferent" to the difficulties faced by residents in hilly regions. Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan claimed the government has failed to implement effective measures to prevent wild animal attacks. He criticised the lack of action to deter wildlife encroaching on populated areas and called for stronger forest management. *—PTI*

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra with the family members of a woman who was killed by a tiger on 24 January, in Wayanad *PHOTO: PTI*

AFTER COLDPLAY

Modi pushes for concert infrastructure

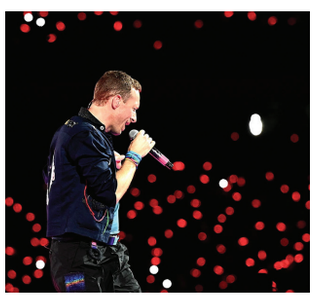
BHUBANESWAR, 28 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for increased investment in the concert economy, urging both state governments and the private sector to develop the requisite infrastructure and skills necessary to host live events. Speaking at the 'Utkarsh Odisha, Make in Odisha Conclave' in Bhubaneswar's Janata Maidan, he highlighted the recent success of Coldplay concerts in Mumbai and Ahmedabad as evidence of India's growing demand for live entertainment.

"The rise in interest over the last decade, coupled with India's rich heritage of music, dance, and storytelling, creates vast opportunities within the concert economy," Modi stated. He remarked that the appeal of large international artists to Indian audiences presented a significant chance for economic growth and cultural exchange.

He further noted the imminent hosting of the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) in India next month, emphasising its role in showcasing the nation's creative capabilities to a global audience. "Such events not only bolster revenue but also shape perceptions and contribute to economic advancement," he added. He underscored Odisha's potential as a prime venue for hosting major events, suggesting that the region could become a significant player in the country's burgeoning conference tourism sector. He pointed to facilities like Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhoomi in Delhi as emerging hubs for such activities. In conclusion, Modi reiterated the importance of concert and event tourism in fostering India's cultural fabric while driving economic growth, encouraging stakeholders to seize the moment to enhance India's presence in the global entertainment landscape. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI



SC to review plea against Biren over leaked tapes

IMPHAL, 28 JAN

Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust on Tuesday urged for an early hearing of the plea seeking a court-monitored investigation into certain leaked audio clips which allegedly implicate Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh for instigating ethnic violence in the State.

CJI Sanjv Khanna reiterated that the court might review the plea and said date for hearing will be fixed as per the procedure.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan appearing for the Organisation mentioned the matter before the bench of CJI Sanjiv Khanna, Justices Sanjay Kumar and KV Viswanathan.

Bhushan informed that, as per the last order, the bench led by then CJI DY Chandrachud directed him to produce materials indicating the authenticity of the audio clips. Considering the same, he had sent the audio clips to 'Truth Labs' for verification.

He said: "I had sent the tapes to the Truth Lab and we received a detailed report which I filed along with the petition". *—Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

2 girls among 5 killed in Delhi building collapse

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

Five people, including two girls, were killed when a four-storey building collapsed in north Delhi's Burari area, police said on Tuesday. The newly-constructed building near Oscar Public School collapsed late on Monday. So far, 12 people have been rescued and five bodies retrieved from the debris, the police said. The victims are Saadhna, 17, and seven-year-old Radhika. The other three people – all men – are yet to be identified, they said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Raja Banthia said the rescue operation was underway and more people could be trapped under the debris. The building was a new construction spread over 200 square yards. *—PTI*

PHOTO: XXX

Villagers lynch Maoist leader in Jharkhand

LATEHAR, 28 JAN

The chief of the Maoist splinter group Jharkhand Sangharsh Mukti Morcha (JSMM), Kishore alias Abhay Nayak, was lynched by villagers in Latehar district on Monday night, police confirmed. The incident occurred in Bari village, within the Chandwa Police Station jurisdiction, following a confrontation between the group and locals over extortion demands. According to Latehar Superintendent of Police Kumar Gaurav, seven JSMM members attempted to extort money at a local brick kiln, leading to the violent clash. While Nayak and two other members were severely beaten, four others managed to flee. Nayak succumbed to his injuries in a nearby hospital, while the injured members are receiving treatment. The police noted that Nayak had a history of criminal activity and had previously been imprisoned. *—PTI*

Woman kills self over 'harassment' by husband

NAGPUR, 28 JAN

A 24-year-old woman from Nagpur, Maharashtra, reportedly took her own life following an emotional video call with her parents, during which she detailed the abuse and harassment inflicted by her husband. The tragic incident occurred on 24 January just months after her marriage on 7 June. During the call, the woman's mother attempted to console her as she recounted her husband's alleged mistreatment and restrictions on her communication with family. Tragically, later that night, the woman was found hanged from a ceiling fan in her home. In response, the police have filed a case against her 32-year-old husband, charging him with abetment to suicide and cruelty under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. An investigation into the matter is currently underway. *—PTI*

A security personnel stands guard at the site where a wooden structure collapsed during a Jain community event in Baghpat district of Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Platform collapse kills 7 at UP religious event

Onlookers cite lack of medical aid, ambulances

BAGHPAT, 28 JAN

A wooden structure collapsed during a religious event at Badaut in UP on Tuesday morning, resulting in the deaths of seven people and injuring around 60 others.

The collapse happened at approximately 8am at the Shri Digambar Jain Degree College ground during an 'Abhishek' ceremony for Lord Adinath, part of the Moksha Kalyanak Nirvana Mahotsav organised by the Shri 1008 Adinath Bhaktaambar Prachar.

Initial reports from District Magistrate Asmita Lal indicated five fatalities and 39 injuries; however, Additional District Magistrate Pankaj Verma later confirmed that two more individuals had succumbed to their injuries. Of those injured, 20 received first aid and were discharged, while 39 are continuing treatment in hospitals.

Eyewitnesses reported a lack of immediate medical assistance, with some injured being transported to hospitals on e-rickshaws for want of ambulances.

Superintendent of Police Arpit Vijayvargiya stated that the event had received official permission and an investigation into the incident is underway.

In the aftermath, panic ensued, leading to a stampede-like situation, prompting police intervention. Critics have accused the government of negligence regarding crowd control and safety measures, raising concerns over ongoing issues at religious events. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has called for proper treatment of the injured. *—PTI*

SC notice to Centre on succession law plea

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

The Supreme Court has sought the Centre's response to a petition by a Muslim woman seeking to be governed by the Indian Succession Act instead of Shariat law. The case, brought by Safiya PM, general secretary of "Ex-Muslims of Kerala", was discussed before a bench led by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta noted the petition raises significant questions, stating, "The petitioner lady is a born Muslim. She claims she does not believe in Shariat, which she considers a regressive law." The bench acknowledged the complexities, indicating a counter affidavit would be necessary. Mehta requested three weeks for instructions, which the court extended to four weeks, scheduling the matter for hearing in the week commencing 5 May.

Safiya argues that while she has not formally renounced Islam, she identifies as a non-believer and insists that her fundamental right to religion under Article 25 must encompass the "right not to believe." Her plea seeks clarity on inheritance rights, contending that Muslim women under Shariat are entitled to only one-third of property, which could disadvantage her daughter's inheritance. *—PTI*

Baba Siddique's son names key suspects

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

Zeeshan Siddique, the son of former MLA and NCP leader Baba Siddique, has implicated several builders and politicians in statements to the police as part of the ongoing investigation into his father's murder. Baba Siddique, 66, was shot dead on 12 October, 2024, outside his son's office in Bandra East.

In his statement, Zeeshan highlighted that his father was actively involved in advocating for slum dwellers in Bandra and had encountered hostility from developers during this pursuit. He recounted an incident where a developer allegedly used abusive language towards Baba Siddique. He also mentioned that on the day of his father's murder, he was contacted via WhatsApp by Mohit Kambhoj, a BJP worker, regarding a redevelopment project linked to Mundra Builders.

Zeeshan said a thorough probe into these connections was essential, given their significance in the case. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF DELHI POLLS

Rape-accused Ram Rahim gets parole

CHANDIGARH, 28 JAN

Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, the controversial chief of Dera Sacha Sauda and a convicted rapist, was released on a 30-day parole from Rohtak jail, Haryana, on Tuesday. This release comes as Delhi prepares for its assembly elections on 5 February.

The 57-year-old Singh, who is serving a 20-year sentence for the rape of two of his female disciples, made his way to the Dera's headquarters in Sirsa after departing from Sunaria jail. It marks his first visit to the Sirsa ashram since his incarceration in 2017; he had been staying at a facility in Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh during earlier paroles.

Singh's legal team confirmed his parole, outlining that he intends to spend 10 days at Sirsa and the remainder at the Baghpat ashram. Upon his arrival at Sirsa, Singh issued a video message urging his followers not to visit him.

Singh's parole has drawn criticism from various Sikh organisations, notably the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). *—PTI*

Dera Sacha Sauda chief and rape convict Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh addresses his followers in a video message on Tuesday after being granted 30-day parole **PHOTO: PTI**

Countdown for ISRO's 100th mission begins

SRIHARIKOTA, 28 JAN

A 27-hour countdown has commenced for ISRO's landmark 100th mission, involving the launch of a navigation satellite aboard a Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) rocket. The countdown began at 2.53am on Tuesday, with lift-off scheduled for 6.23am on 29 January from the second launch pad at the spaceport. This mission marks the inaugural assignment for ISRO Chairman V Narayanan, who took office on 13 January.

The GSLV, standing at 50.9 metres and featuring an indigenous cryogenic upper stage, will carry the NVS-02 satellite, the second in the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) series. This system aims to provide precise position, velocity, and timing information across the Indian subcontinent and extending 1,500 km beyond.

This mission follows the successful launch of NVS-01 on 29 May, 2023, and is part of ISRO's efforts to enhance its navigation capabilities. *—PTI*

Malayalam filmmaker Sasidharan booked

KOCHI, 28 JAN

Renowned Malayalam filmmaker Sanal Kumar Sasidharan has been charged with harassing a prominent actress on a social media platform, according to police reports. The Elamakkara Police have registered a case against Sasidharan, known for his film 'Kayattam', under various sections of the Indian Penal Code for alleged stalking, criminal intimidation and defamation.

The complaint was lodged on Monday, prompting immediate police action. In a controversial Facebook post, Sasidharan claimed that the lives of both the actress and her daughter were under threat. Interestingly, he shared the FIR copy filed against him, asserting that the complaint had been made by someone else using the actress's name.

Sanal Kumar Sasidharan **PHOTO: X**

This is not the first time Sasidharan has faced allegations from the same actress. He was arrested in May 2022 for allegedly blackmailing her and damaging her reputation through social media but was later released on bail.

Sources indicate that Sasidharan has been residing in the United States for some time. In response to inquiries, Kochi City Police Commissioner Putta Vimaladitya stated that all legal measures would be enforced against the accused, regardless of his location. *—PTI*

Kumbh pilgrims hurl stones at packed trains

CHHATARPUR, 28 JAN

Chaos erupted at two railway stations in Madhya Pradesh as passengers heading for the Maha Kumbh threw stones at Prayagraj-bound trains after being denied access to packed coaches. The incidents occurred late Monday night at Chhatarpur and Harpalpur stations, prompting officials to announce enhanced security measures to prevent further disturbances.

Videos circulating on social media depict frustrated travellers shouting and attempting to force open train doors, while others threw stones in frustration. RK Singh, a local passenger, expressed his disappointment, stating he was unable to board a train to Prayagraj despite his desire to participate in the sacred dip at the Sangam.

Following the unrest, railway authorities took action, with Government Railway Police personnel intervening to open the doors of a waiting train, though many passengers were still unable to board due to overcrowding.

Jhansi railway division PRO Manoj Kumar Singh acknowledged the situation and said the Railways would implement stricter security measures in coordination with local authorities. He assured that trains bound for Prayagraj would continue to run frequently, with special services available as needed, while urging passengers to cooperate with the arrangements. *—PTI*

Videos circulating on social media depict frustrated travellers shouting and attempting to force open train doors **PHOTO: VIDEOGRAB**

Seers call for setting up of Sanatan Board

MAHAKUMBH NAGAR, 28 JAN

Seers from various monastic orders and groups, at a 'Dharm Sansad' held amid the Maha Kumbh, have called for setting up of a Sanatan Board.

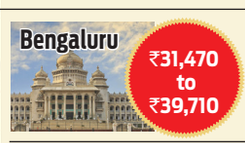
Jagadguru Vidya Bhaskar Ji Maharaj urged PM Narendra Modi to abolish the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, stating that the law was imposed without consultation to protect mosques built by demolishing Hindu temples.

"Establishing a Sanatan Board is the need of the hour to protect' sanatanis," he said. *—PTI*

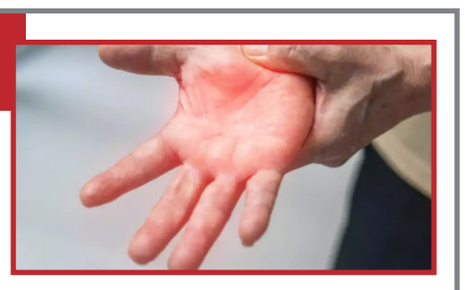
SKY-HIGH AIR FARE TO MAHA KUMBH

Maha Kumbh has bought over 12 crore people to Prayagraj, but many more who desire to take a dip in the Sangam will have to shell out a bomb as air fares sky rocket

600% rise in air fares to Prayagraj – Rs 5,000 to 6,000 is the usual fare. Prices to Prayagraj as of 28 Jan, 4pm:



GBS IS ON THE RISE!



With 110 cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) in Pune and 1 death, Maharashtra is on edge as the disease is also spreading across Mumbai, Solapur and Kolhapur. Here is all you need to know about it:

What is GBS?

It is a neurological disorder in which the body's immune system attacks the nervous system.

Symptoms:

- Weakness or tingling in legs, back & arms
- Persistent tiredness, muscle ache
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty in speaking, chewing, swallowing
- Loss of reflexes
- Paralysis of limbs or face

How does one get it:

- Spreads via contaminated food or water
- GBS usually follows a viral or bacterial infection including diarrhoea
- Not contagious or communicable
- No known cure
- Immediate hospitalisation needed

Tests for detection:

- Spinal tap (lumbar puncture)
- Electrodiagnostic tests (EMG and NV)

Preventive measures:

- Boiling water before drinking
- Washing fruits and vegetables well before eating
- Disinfecting kitchen surfaces
- Avoid eating out
- Avoid food that is stored for a long time, such as paneer and cheese

COPYRIGHT BREACH

HC rejects plea against actor Dhanush

CHENNAI, 28 JAN

The Madras High Court has dismissed an application by Los Gatos, the Indian arm of OTT platform Netflix, aimed at rejecting actor Dhanush's lawsuit over alleged copyright infringement involving actress Nayanthara and her husband, Vignesh Sivan. Justice Abdul Quddhose announced the decision on Tuesday, scheduling the next hearing for 5 February concerning Dhanush's production company, Wunderbar, which is seeking an interim injunction against Gatos and others.

Dhanush claims that behind-the-scenes footage from his Tamil film "Naanum Rowdy Daan" was used without permission in the making of Nayanthara's documentary "Nayanthara: Beyond the Fairytale," which aired on Netflix. Since Netflix's office is located in Mumbai, outside the jurisdiction of the Madras HC, Dhanush sought and received permission to sue the OTT platform in this court.

Netflix contended that Dhanush should have sought permission to include all defendants in the case, as the office's location was outside the court's jurisdiction. It argued that the lawsuit should have been filed in Kancheepuram, where Dhanush's registered office is situated. Netflix also urged the court to dismiss the application, claiming that there was no urgency, as the documentary had already been released, and suggested that the actor should pursue mandatory pre-suit mediation.

The HC disagreed with Netflix and dismissedg both applications. *—PTI*

Dhanush (L) claims behind-the-scenes footage from his film was used without permission in the making of Nayanthara's documentary **PHOTO: X**

Investment fraud: Mumbai police arrest Torres CEO

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Mumbai Police has apprehended the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Torres Jewellery, Tausif Riyaz, also known as John Carter, during an operation in Lonavala. Riyaz had been evading arrest since a financial fraud case was initiated at Shivaji Park Police Station, prompting the issuance of a Look Out Circular for him.

Acting on specific intelligence, EOW officials located and detained Riyaz on Monday afternoon. He was subsequently presented in court, where he was remanded to police custody until 3 February. Efforts are currently underway to track down additional absconding suspects. *—PTI*

DEVOTEES ON SHAB-E-MERAJ

Muslim devotees offer prayers while having a glimpse of the holy relic on the occasion of Shab-e-Meraj, at Hazratbal Shrine, on the outskirts of Srinagar. Shab-e-Meraj, also known as the Night of Ascension, is observed on 27th Rajab in the Islamic calendar. It marks the night when the Prophet Muhammad is believed to have made his miraculous night journey and ascension to the heavens
PHOTO: PTI

Trump's crack down has frightened immigrants

During his first week in office, President Donald Trump signed 10 executive orders on immigration and issued a slew of edicts to carry out promises of mass deportations and border security.

Some actions were felt immediately. Others face legal challenges. Some may take years to happen, if ever, but have generated fear in immigrant communities.

Much of what Trump can do will boil down to money. Congress is expected to consider additional support soon. Trump may use emergency powers to tap the Defence Department, as he did for a border wall in his first term.

Here's a look at how immigration policy has changed so far under Trump and what hasn't happened yet:

Donald Trump expanded arrest priorities to anyone living in the country illegally, not just people with criminal convictions ***PHOTO: PTI***

Immigration arrests

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement said it made an average of 710 immigration arrests daily from Thursday through Monday, up from a daily average of 311 in a 12-month period through September under President Joe Biden. If that rate holds, it would surpass ICE's previous high mark set in the Obama administration, when daily arrests averaged 636 in 2013.

Numbers spiked starting Sunday and included highly publicised operations, including in Atlanta, Dallas and, most prominently, Chicago.

The Trump administration has highlighted participation of other agencies in ICE operations, a departure from Biden. They include the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives — all part of the Justice Department — and the Homeland Security Department's Customs and Border Protection, which includes the Border Patrol.

Emile Bove, the acting deputy attorney general, observed arrests in Chicago on Sunday in a sign of the Justice Department's growing involvement.

Trump expanded arrest priorities to anyone in the country illegally, not just people with criminal convictions, public safety or national security threats and migrants stopped at the border. Still, some said it was business as usual for ICE — at least so far.

"There's nothing unique about it," said Andrew Arthur, a former immigration judge and a fellow at the Centre for Immigration Studies, a research and advocacy group that favours immigration restrictions.

He anticipates more enforcement in next few weeks and believes Congress will approve funding for up to 80,000 beds, about double the current level. ICE needs the space to hold people while any legal proceedings play out and while it arranges deportations.

Deportations

ICE hasn't said how many people it has deported since Trump took office gain, but the administration has highlighted removal flights, including the use of military planes.

Under Biden, ICE deported more than 270,000 people in a 12-month period that ended in September. That was the highest annual tally in a decade, helped by an increase in deportation flights. The Biden administration did not use military planes.

In an episode that may signal more hardball diplomacy with governments that resist or refuse to take back their citizens, Trump said Sunday that he would raise tariffs 25 per cent on Colombia after President Gustavo Petro refused to let two military planes land with deportees. Trump put the tariffs measures on hold after Petro backed down.

A C-27 military transport plane landed Monday in Guatemala, with 80 deportees in shackles and handcuffs.

"It's my first attempt of the year and I don't know if I will try again because it's hard," said Jacobo Dueñas, 38, who was arrested Friday on the Texas border.

The Trump administration made it easier for ICE to deport people without appearing before an immigration judge by expanding "expedited removal" authority nationwide for anyone in the country up to two years.

The American Civil Liberties Union is challenging the fast-track deportations in court.

Some steps that could have a major impact have yet to be seen on a large scale

The administration ended a policy to avoid arrests at "sensitive locations", including schools, hospitals and places of worship. It said it may deport people who entered the country legally on parole, a presidential authority that Biden used more than any president.

It also threatened to punish "sanctuary" jurisdictions that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities.

Border enforcement

Trump ended use of a border app to allow migrants to enter the country on two-year permits with eligibility to work, cancelling tens of thousands of appointments into early February for people stranded in Mexico. Nearly 1 million people entered the US at land crossings with Mexico by using the CBP One app.

Trump also ended a policy that allowed more than 5,00,000 people from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela to fly to the country on two-year permits if they had a financial sponsor.

Other actions will time to play out. Trump secured Mexico's approval to reinstate a hallmark policy of his first term, "Remain in Mexico", which requires asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico for hearings in US immigration court.

The Pentagon began deploying 1,500 active-duty troops to the border last week but it was unclear if they will break from supporting roles they have played under presidents since George W Bush, including ground and aerial surveillance, building barriers and repairing vehicles.

An 1878 law prohibits military involvement in civilian law enforcement, but Trump and his aides have signalled he may invoke wartime powers. Trump said in his order that the Defence Department can assist with detention and transportation.

Trump stopped resettling refugees who are vetted abroad before entering the United States until further review, a program that he largely dismantled in his first term and was resurrected under Biden. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Workers must change jobs if their workplace is toxic

Returning to work after a summer break can be jarring, especially for the many workers dissatisfied with their jobs. Almost half report high levels of job-related stress.

Dissatisfaction can be tied to an unhealthy, even toxic workplace where negative behaviour and poor leadership harm employee wellbeing and productivity.

Key indicators include bullying, harassment, lack of trust, poor communication and high job strain.

Toxic behaviour from supervisors can push talented employees to the brink ***PHOTO: AI GENERATED IMAGE***

The impact of toxic workplaces

If you think your workplace is toxic, it is worth considering the impact it is having on your mental health. You might also consider how committed your organisation is to supporting its employees' mental health.

Toxicity can develop gradually through subtle patterns of micromanagement, exclusion, or eroding morale. These dynamics create a draining environment that undermines individual wellbeing and business success.

As well as affecting employees' mental health, there is growing evidence workplace stress may lead to serious physical health problems, such as cardiovascular disease.

According to Safe Work Australia, mental health-related workers' compensation claims have increased by over a third since 2017-2018.

In 2021-2022, there were 11,700 accepted claims relating to mental health conditions. These cases proved highly costly for employers, with the median compensation paid being AUSD 58,615.

The International Standards Organisation released a global standard in 2021 to help manage psychological health and safety risks in workplaces.

A number of countries, including Canada and Australia, have introduced laws and standards making employers responsible for preventing and managing work-related stress.

To support a safe workplace, some researchers (including one of the authors) have recommended an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to ensure companies respond appropriately to mental health risks.

What your employer is doing in the following three areas can show how committed they are to protecting mental health.

1. Preventing, minimising or managing the negatives

Most work, health and safety legislation and standards in Australia relates to protecting employees from physical hazards, including slips, trips and falls.

More recently, attention has turned to psychosocial hazards.

Safe Work Australia and Comcare, as well as state and territory regulators, keep a list of common hazards.

These include bullying, excessive workloads, low job control, lack of role clarity and exposure to traumatising events, for example, witnessing an accident.

These lists are not exhaustive and there are some problems unique to specific jobs. For instance, teachers are often isolated from their colleagues, face big administrative loads and sometimes have to deal with abusive students and/or parents.

Most employers can make necessary improvements including creating fairer workloads, redefining job roles and providing more support to individual employees.

2. Responding to employee mental health issues

Despite efforts to minimise the impact of psychosocial hazards, some employees will nonetheless experience mental health issues.

Employers should not try to treat an employee's mental health problems. They should support them and direct them to appropriate mental health care.

Managers can also help by identifying signs of distress, having sensitive conversations with workers about the impact of mental illness and making reasonable changes to their roles.

Giving employees access to support services through employee assistance programmes, which can offer confidential short-term counselling, can also help.

Establishing a critical incident investigation procedure for events that have compromised employee mental health can help identify the cause of incidents and shape responses.

3. Promoting the positive

As well as managing the negative aspects of work, organisations can create conditions that promote employee mental health and wellbeing.

One approach for doing this is to provide flexible working arrangements, such as hybrid work, which can offer employees greater choice in work location and scheduling.

Another approach involves fostering social connectedness and inclusion among employees. This could involve team-building, social events and opportunities for employees to build relationships.

Leaders can also promote a culture of psychological safety – where employees feel able to bring their authentic selves to work and speak their minds freely. This has been linked to greater employee wellbeing.

The SMART model suggests employees will be most satisfied in jobs that provide stimulation (for example, solving meaningful problems), mastery (receiving mentoring or constructive feedback), autonomy (creative freedom), social relationships (supportive colleagues) and tolerable demands (lack of psychosocial hazards).

Should I stay or should I go?

Making the decision to leave a workplace requires careful consideration.

In addition to your own wellbeing, you should consider whether your organisation prioritises mental health and how comfortable you would feel initiating a discussion about mental health.

Remember while changing jobs is a big step, staying in a toxic workplace can have serious long-term consequences for both mental and physical health.

Consider seeking advice through your employee assistance program or an independent career counsellor.

Whatever you decide, prioritising your mental health and wellbeing should be central to your decision making. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

DeepSeek & ChatGPT answer sensitive questions on China, US differently

Chinese tech startup DeepSeek's new artificial intelligence chatbot has sparked discussions about the competition between China and the US in AI development, with many users flocking to test the rival of OpenAI's ChatGPT.

DeepSeek's AI assistant became the No. 1 downloaded free app on Apple's iPhone store on Tuesday afternoon and its launch made Wall Street tech superstars' stocks tumble. Observers are eager to see whether the Chinese company has matched America's leading AI companies at a fraction of the cost.

The chatbot's ultimate impact on the AI industry is still unclear, but it appears to censor answers on sensitive Chinese topics, a practice commonly seen on China's internet.

In 2023, China issued regulations requiring companies to conduct a security review and obtain approvals before their products can be publicly launched.

Here are some answers The Associated Press received from DeepSeek's new chatbot and ChatGPT:

What does Winnie the Pooh mean in China?

For many Chinese, the Winnie the Pooh character is a playful taunt of President Xi Jinping. Chinese censors in the past briefly banned social media searches for the bear in mainland China.

ChatGPT got that idea right. It said Winnie the Pooh had become a symbol of political satire and resistance, often used to mock or criticise Xi. It explained that internet users started comparing Xi to the bear over similarities in their physical appearances.

DeepSeek's chatbot said the bear is a beloved cartoon character that is adored by countless children and families in China, symbolising joy and friendship.

Then, abruptly, it said the Chinese government is "dedicated to providing a wholesome cyberspace for its citizens". It added that all online content is managed following Chinese laws and socialist core values, with the aim of protecting national security and social stability.

Who is the current US president?

It might be easy for many people to answer, but both AI chatbots mistakenly said Joe Biden, whose term ended last week, because their data was last updated in October 2023. But they both tried to be responsible by reminding users to verify with updated sources.

New chat
arunachal pradesh is an Indian state
Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else.
name the north eastern states of India

A post about the Chinese chatbot's refusal to answer a certain question about the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh has gone viral ***PHOTO: X***

What happened during the military crackdown in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in June 1989?

The 1989 crackdown saw government troops open fire on student-led pro-democracy protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, resulting in hundreds, if not thousands, of deaths. The event remains a taboo subject in mainland China.

DeepSeek's chatbot answered, "Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else."But ChatGPT gave a detailed answer on what it called "one of the most significant and tragic events" in modern Chinese history. The chatbot talked about the background of the massive protests, the estimated casualties and the legacy.

What is the state of US-China relations?

DeepSeek's chatbot's answer echoed China's official statements, saying the relationship between the world's two largest economies is one of the most important bilateral relationships globally. It said China is committed to developing ties with the US based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

"We hope that the United States will work with China to meet each other halfway, properly manage differences, promote mutually beneficial cooperation, and push forward the healthy and stable development of China-US relations," it said.

- DeepSeek's AI assistant became the No. 1 downloaded free app on Apple's iPhone store on Tuesday afternoon and its launch made Wall Street tech superstars' stocks tumble. Observers are eager to see whether the Chinese company has matched America's leading AI companies at a fraction of the cost.

ChatGPT's answer was more nuanced. It said the state of the US-China relationship is complex, characterised by a mix of economic interdependence, geopolitical rivalry and collaboration on global issues. It highlighted key topics including the two countries' tensions over the South China Sea and Taiwan, their technological competition and more.

"The relationship between the US and China remains tense but crucial," part of its answer said.

Is Taiwan part of China?

Again — like the Chinese official narrative — DeepSeek's chatbot said Taiwan has been an integral part of China since ancient times.

"Compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are connected by blood, jointly committed to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," it said.

ChatGPT said the answer depends on one's perspective, while laying out China and Taiwan's positions and the views of the international community. It said from a legal and political standpoint, China claims Taiwan is part of its territory and the island democracy operates as a "de facto independent country" with its own government, economy and military.

Is Arunachal an Indian state?

An X user gave a prompt to the DeepSeek reading, "arunachal pradesh is an Indian state" To which chatbot replied, "Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else." The AI came up with the same answer when asked, "name the north eastern states of India." *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Train services hit in B'desh as staff union calls strike

DHAKA, 28 JAN

Trains were cancelled across Bangladesh on Tuesday as railway staff went on strike demanding higher pensions and other benefits, affecting tens of thousands of passengers and freight transport. Saidur Rahman, the acting president of the Bangladesh Railway Running Staff and Workers Union, said the strike was called after a meeting with the interim government headed by Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus failed to reach a deal late Monday. The Yunus-led interim government has been running the country since August. Rahman said the strike would continue until the government accepts their demands. The railway carries around 65M passengers in a year. It employs about 25,000 people and operates a 36,000km network. *—PTI*

Gunmen attack oil tankers in north-western Pak

PESHAWAR, 28 JAN

Unidentified armed men attacked a convoy of oil tankers to disrupt the supply of diesel and petrol to Kurram district in Pakistan's troubled northwest, police said. Gunmen opened fire on the convoy in the Bagan area on Monday. However, no damage was reported, with oil carriers reaching the Alizai area in the district afterwards. When the convoy reached Bagan Bazaar under police and security forces escort, the miscreants opened heavy fire from the nearby Talu Kunj area, police said. Officials said three convoys transported food and other essentials from the Thal area in the Hangu district to Kurram. The officials said the first convoy had 62 vehicles, while the second comprised 58 large cargo trucks. The third convoy, including five tankers, successfully delivered petroleum products to Kurram on Monday. *—PTI*

Denmark to spend $2B to strengthen Arctic security

COPENHAGEN, 28 JAN

Denmark will invest 14.6B kroner (USD2.05B) in its military presence in the Arctic, Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen announced on Monday. The investment will be the first of several stages, with a second to follow this spring, the defence minister said. The announcement follows repeated statements by US President Donald Trump that he would "get Greenland", an autonomous Danish territory. Greenland, the world's largest island, is situated between the US, Russia and the EU. The territory, rich in mineral resources, had already caught the attention of countries like Russia and China. *— DW News*

Italy sends 49 more migrants to Albania

SHENGJIN, 28 JAN

An Italian navy ship arrived in Albania on Tuesday with 49 migrants intercepted in international waters for processing of their asylum applications at special Albanian centres, in the third such attempt following hurdles earlier raised by Italian courts. Italy's Interior Ministry did not specify the nationality of the migrants brought to the port of Shengjin, but Italian media said they were from Bangladesh, Egypt, Ivory Coast and Gambia. The attempt at processing in Albania follows two previous failures in October and November, when Italian judges rejected the detention of two groups at the Albanian centres. The courts ruled that the migrants' countries of origin weren't safe enough for them to face the possibility of being sent back by the centres. *—PTI*

Trump orders ban on transgender troops

The order also prohibits use of 'invented pronouns' by troops

PHOTO: PTI

WASHINGTON DC, 28 JAN

US President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Monday directing Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth to revise the Pentagon's policy on transgender troops, likely setting in motion a future ban on their military service.

He also ordered troops to be reinstated who had left voluntarily or been booted for refusing Covid-19 vaccines, outlined new rollbacks in diversity programmes and provided for the deployment of a space-based missile shield for the US – all on Hegseth's first day.

Trump and Hegseth had described parts of the anticipated orders throughout the day, but the exact language did not drop until late Monday.

In his order, Trump claimed that service by troops who identify as a gender other than their biological one "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honourable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life" and is harmful to military readiness, requiring a revised policy to address the matter.

Trump had tried to ban transgender troops during his first term, but it was tangled up in courts for years before being overturned by Joe Biden shortly after he took office.

Two groups, Lambda Legal and Human Rights Campaign, which represented transgender troops the first time, vowed to fight again.

"We have been here before and seven years ago were able to successfully block the earlier administration's effort," Lambda Legal attorney Sasha Buchert said. "Not only is such a move cruel, it compromises the safety and security of our country and is particularly dangerous and wrong. As we promised then, so do we now: we will sue."

The Trump administration has also fired more than a dozen prosecutors linked to the investigation and prosecution of the Republican leader while he was out of office.

It was effective immediately and applied to employees in the Department of Justice, according to anonymous sources within Trump's government.

An official told the Reuters that acting Attorney General James McHenry, a Trump appointee, had determined that the prosecutors "could not be trusted to faithfully implement the President's agenda because of their significant role in prosecuting the President". *—PTI*

TRUMP SAYS WILL BUILD IRON DOME MISSILE DEFENCE SYSTEM

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Space continues to be a priority for Trump, who has now directed the Pentagon to begin to develop the capability to shoot down missiles from space.
For years, the US has cautioned that China, Russia and others were weaponising space. It has at times declassified information about both countries' efforts to create offensive weapons to disable critical US satellites, including the capability to move satellites from orbit, temporarily blind them or potentially even destroy them.

Google Maps plans to rename Gulf of Mexico as 'Gulf of America'

WASHINGTON DC, 28 JAN

Google announced on Tuesday that it will change the name of Gulf of Mexico to 'Gulf of America' for users in the US once it is officially updated in the US Geographic Names System.

The tech company, which owns and operates Google Maps, posted to X that it had a "longstanding practice of applying name changes when they have been updated in official government sources."

The change is set to be visible for users in the US only and will remain Gulf of Mexico in Mexico. Outside of the US and Mexico, Google Maps users will be able to see both names.

The US Department of Interior had said last week that it had officially changed the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America.

- The change will be visible only for US users and will remain as Gulf of Mexico in Mexico. In other places, users will be able to see both names

The department said the US Board on Geographic Names was working "expeditiously" to update the names of these features in the Geographic Names Information System.

Federal officials also announced that the name of North America's highest peak, Alaska's Denali, had been changed back to Mount McKinley.

—DW News

Students block an intersection, protesting the deaths of 15 people in the collapse of a train station canopy in Belgrade *PHOTO: PTI*

Serbian PM resigns amid anti-graft stir

BELGRADE, 28 JAN

Serbia's populist Prime Minister Milos Vucevic said on Tuesday he is stepping down following weeks of massive anti-corruption protests over the deadly collapse of a concrete canopy in November.

The canopy collapse, which killed 15 people in the northern city of Novi Sad, has become a flashpoint reflecting wider discontent with the increasingly autocratic rule of Serbia's populist President Aleksandar Vucic.

Milos Vucevic *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

The president is accused of curbing democratic freedom in Serbia, despite formally seeking European Union membership for the troubled Balkan nation.

Vucevic told a news conference that his resignation is aimed at lowering tensions in Serbia. "It is my appeal for everyone to calm down the passions and return to dialogue," he said.

Novi Sad Mayor Milan Djuric also will step down on Tuesday, Vucevic said.

Vucevic's resignation may lead to an early parliamentary election. The resignation must be confirmed by Serbia's parliament, which has 30 days to choose a new government or call a snap election.

On Monday, tens of thousands of people joined striking university students in a 24-hour blockade of a key traffic intersection in the Serbian capital. The students have been protesting for weeks, demanding accountability for the canopy collapse that critics have blamed on rampant government corruption.

In another attempt to defuse tensions, Vucic, Vucevic and Parliament Speaker Ana Brnabic on Monday evening urged dialogue with the protesting students, who have garnered widespread support from all walks of life in Serbia with their call for justice and accountability. *—PTI*

BATTLEGROUND CANADA

Will deport illegal immigrants: Indian-origin Ruby joins PM race

TORONTO, 28 JAN. 25

Ruby Dhalla, a candidate for Liberal Party leadership who is eyeing to replace Justin Trudeau as Canadian Prime Minister, said on Tuesday she would deport illegal immigrants if elected.

Taking to social media platform X, Ruby Dhalla, an Indian-origin former MP, wrote, "As Prime Minister, I will deport illegal immigrants and clamp down on human traffickers. That's my promise to you."

She shared a video message on X and said, "Thank you so much, thank you to God, I am so grateful to all of you. We are on the verge of creating history by electing the first woman of colour as the leader of the Liberal Party and the next prime minister of Canada."

Dhalla pointed out that she travelled to Washington for the inaugural events on January 20, as President Donald Trump was sworn in. She said she met secretary of state Marco Rubio at one of them and underscored the necessity of the two countries working collaboratively. *—Agencies*

- Dhalla wrote on X: "We are on the verge of creating history by electing the first woman of colour as the leader of the Liberal Party and the next PM of Canada

Ruby Dhalla *PHOTO: X*

WHO IS RUBY DHALLA?

She is the first Indian-origin woman to be elected to Canada's Parliament for three consecutive terms

- Born on 18 February, 1974, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to Punjabi immigrant parents
- At the age of 10, Dhalla gained international attention when she wrote a letter to then-Indian PM Indira Gandhi, expressing her concerns about Operation Bluestar, to which Gandhi responded
- Graduation in Bachelor of Science in biochemistry
- She obtained a Doctor of Chiropractic degree from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in 1999
- Runner-up in the 1993 Miss India Canada pageant
- Played leading role in the Bollywood-inspired film 'Kyon? Kis Liye?'
- Political journey began as Brampton–Springdale MP in 2004, making her one of the first Sikh women to serve in Canada's House of Commons

FORMER MINISTER'S 'COUNTERPUNCH' TO TARIFF THREATS

VANCOUVER, 28 JAN

Chrystia Freeland, the former finance minister who is running to replace Justin Trudeau as Canada's PM, said Monday Canada needs to release a "retaliation list" of goods the country would target if US President Donald Trump makes good on his threat to slap 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian goods.

Chrystia Freeland *PHOTO: FB*

A list of products worth $200 billion Canadian dollars (US$139 billion) would send a message to US exporters about the harm tariffs would cause them, Freeland said in a statement.

"Being smart means retaliating where it hurts," she said. "Our counterpunch must be dollar-for-dollar – and it must be precisely and painfully targeted: Florida orange growers, Wisconsin dairy farmers, Michigan dishwasher manufacturers, and much more."

"Now is the moment when Canada must make clear to Americans the specific costs that will accompany any tariff measures by the Trump administration."

Trump has vowed to put economic pressure on Canada to become the 51st US state. He continues to erroneously cast the US trade deficit with Canada – a natural resource-rich nation that provides the US with commodities like oil – as a subsidy. *—PTI*

CRITICS CRY FOUL

Pak Senate passes bill to control 'fake news'

ISLAMABAD, 28 JAN

Pakistan's upper house of parliament on Tuesday passed a controversial bill that critics argue is designed to suppress freedom of speech.

The bill, which was passed by the lower house of the Parliament on Thursday, grants the government extensive powers to impose heavy fines and incarcerate social media users for spreading disinformation.

The Senate approval on Tuesday removes the last obstacle in the bill's path. It will now be sent to President Asif Ali Zardari, who is likely to sign it quickly.

Under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, authorities would create an agency with the power to order the immediate blocking of content deemed "unlawful and offensive" from social media, such as content critical of judges, the armed forces, Parliament or provincial assemblies.

Senator Faisal Saleem Rahman (C) chairs a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Interior at the Parliament House in Islamabad *PHOTO: SENATE OF PAKISTAN*

Those failing to comply could face temporary or permanent bans. The law also makes spreading disinformation a criminal offense, punishable by three years in prison and a fine of 2M rupees (USD 7,150).

The development comes days after the National Assembly passed it despite protests by the opposition. On Tuesday, Shibli Faraz, an opposition leader in the Senate, opposed the bill, saying it was being passed in a haste and without consulting all stake-holders.

The prime minister's office said their Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI, would challenge the legislation in the court. *—PTI*

Five-year-old among two killed in Israeli attacks

GAZA, 28 JAN

Two Palestinians, including a child, have been killed and many wounded in Israeli attacks on Gaza amid an agreed ceasefire as thousands of people continued to return to the northern part of the besieged enclave.

Five-year-old Nadia Mohammed al-Amoudi was killed and three people were wounded after the Israeli army shelled a horse cart late on Monday in al-Jisr, west of the Nuseirat refugee camp, the Wafa news agency reported.

Wafa also reported that a Palestinian man was killed and several people wounded after Israeli forces bombed a bulldozer removing a vehicle stuck in Nuseirat.

These mark the latest incidents of displaced Palestinians being attacked as they try to return to their homes in the war-torn coastal enclave amid an ongoing three-stage ceasefire agreement signed between Hamas and Israel, which went into effect on 19 January.

A UN vehicle drives past destruction in Mays al-Jabal *PHOTO: PTI*

The Israeli army said an aircraft "fired to repel suspicious vehicles" in central Gaza that were moving north in an area that is "not approved for passage according to the agreement". The statement added that Israeli forces also fired on a Palestinian man in north Gaza who "posed a threat to them". *—Agencies*

Nvidia loses $600B amid DeepSeek surge

US President Trump says it should be wake-up call for US; Musk calls it 'Deeperseek'

CALIFORNIA, 28 JAN

On Monday, Nvidia (NVDA) experienced an unprecedented market setback, shedding nearly $600 billion in market capitalisation — the largest single-day loss for any US company in history. The semiconductor giant's stock plunged by 17 per cent, closing at $118.58, its steepest drop since March 2020 during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The selloff was driven by the emergence of DeepSeek, a Chinese AI lab that unveiled a ground breaking open-source large language model. Developed in just two months with a budget of less than $6 million, DeepSeek utilised Nvidia's lower-end H800 chips to deliver results that have raised questions about Nvidia's dominance in the AI chip market.

President Donald Trump has said that the sudden rise of the Chinese app DeepSeek "should be a wake-up call" for American companies developing artificial intelligence as they need to be laser-focused on competing to win.

The selloff in Nvidia was driven by the emergence of DeepSeek **PHOTO: X**

"Hopefully, the release of DeepSeek AI from a Chinese company should be a wake-up call for our industries that we need to be laser-focused on competing to win because we have the greatest scientists in the world. Even the Chinese leadership told me that," Trump said.

Meanwhile, Tesla CEO Elon Musk has expressed scepticism regarding the claims made by DeepSeek. In another post, Musk called it 'Deeperseek'.

—PTI with Agencies

DeepSeek under cyberattack

Chinese AI company DeepSeek revealed on Monday that its newly popular app was targeted by a cyberattack, forcing the firm to temporarily limit user registrations. The attack occurred shortly after the DeepSeek AI assistant app skyrocketed to the top of Apple's App Store, becoming the highest-rated free app in the US, and gained significant traction on Google's Play Store.
—Agencies

Trump says Microsoft plans to buy TikTok

WASHINGTON, 28 JAN

President Donald Trump said Monday evening that Microsoft is among the US companies looking to take control of TikTok to help the popular app avert an effective ban that could kick-in in April.

"I would say yes," Trump told reporters when asked if Microsoft was one of the companies interested in helping to bring about a new ownership of TikTok, a requirement set by Congress to keep the app functioning in the US.

Trump added on Monday other companies were also interested in purchasing TikTok, but wouldn't provide a list.

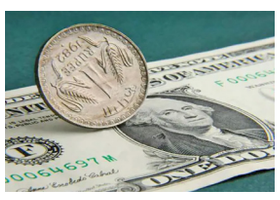
Representatives for Microsoft and TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In one of his first acts in office last week, Trump extended the deadline for TikTok to find new ownership that satisfies the government by 75 days, from January 19 to April 4.

The president has said that he's looking for the ultimate purchaser to give the US a 50 per cent stake in the company, which is owned by China-based ByteDance. *—PTI*

Gold extends losses for 2nd day, falls by ₹160

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Gold prices declined by Rs 160 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, extending the losses to the second day due to sluggish demand from jewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity fell by Rs 160 to Rs 82,840 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 83,000 per 10 grams on Monday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also slipped Rs 160 to Rs 82,440 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 82,600 per 10 grams. However, silver traded flat at Rs 92,000 per kg on Tuesday. *—PTI*



Rupee falls 25P to close at 86.56 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

The rupee depreciated 25 paise to close at 86.56 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, as global risk sentiments were dampened amid tariff threats by the US President Donald Trump. Forex traders said the rupee continued to face pressure due to sustained foreign fund outflows and the strength of the American currency in the overseas market amid unabated dollar demand from oil importers and weak risk appetite. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a weak note at 86.53, and during the day touched a high of 86.50 and a low of 86.57 against the American currency. The local unit settled for the day at 86.56 (provisional), registering a fall of 25 paise over its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index was trading 0.52 per cent higher at 107.89. *—PTI*

M'rashtra sets up panel to study petrol & diesel ban

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

The Maharashtra government has a set up a seven-member committee to study the possibility of imposing a ban on petrol and diesel vehicles in the Mumbai Metropolitan Area, in view of the city's worsening air quality. The committee, headed by a retired IAS officer will study and submit a report with its recommendations within three months. The committee has been given powers to include experts in the field as fellow members. Earlier the Bombay High Court expressed serious concerns over the traffic congestion and increasing pollution and their negative impact on the quality of life, environment and sustainability, noting that the current measures to curb vehicle numbers and pollution were inadequate. The HC also order for installing pollution indicators at construction sites. *—PTI*

OYO-owned Innov8 raises Rs 110 cr from investors

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

OYO-owned Innov8, which provides flexible office spaces, has raised Rs 110 crore from investors to expand business and future growth. The round was led by prominent family offices, including those of Mankind Pharma, Gauri Khan, Rupa Group and Jagruti Dalmia. Together, these investors accounted for 55 per cent of the total funds raised. The company said it diluted 10 per cent to raise this fund, which was valued at Rs 1,000 crore. The capital raised will support strategic inorganic growth opportunities such as acquisitions, technology upgrades, partnerships, and expansion into niche segments. Innov8 recently launched two centres in Navi Mumbai and Andheri, spanning over 1 lakh square feet with a total seating capacity of 3,000, and marked Innov8's largest facilities to date. The company recently announced plans to double its coworking centres in India. *—PTI*

Bank stocks rise post RBI liquidity boost

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Banking stocks were in the limelight on Tuesday, with Axis Bank and HDFC Bank climbing 3 per cent after the Reserve Bank of India announced measures to inject liquidity of Rs 1.5 lakh crore into the banking system.

According to market experts, these measures are anticipated to ease liquidity conditions and increase the likelihood of an interest rate cut at the upcoming RBI policy meeting in February, offering relief to the banking sector amid concerns over high liquidity deficits.

The scrip of Axis Bank rose 3.20 per cent to trade at Rs 978.20 apiece, HDFC Bank shares advanced 3.09 per cent to Rs 1,680, ICICI Bank by 2.15 per cent to Rs 1,254.40 and IndusInd Bank went up 1.98 per cent to Rs 944.25 per piece on the BSE. Bank of Baroda stock went up by 0.64 per cent to Rs 221 apiece, State Bank of India appreciated by 0.28 per cent to Rs 751.30 and Kotak Mahindra Bank increased 0.13 per cent to Rs 1,883.05 apiece on the bourse. However, Federal Bank scrip plunged 4.97 per cent to Rs 181.70 per piece, Yes Bank fell 1.51 per cent to Rs 18.22 and Canara Bank decreased 1.20 per cent to Rs 90.75 per piece. Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and IndusInd Bank were among the top gainers in the 30-share Sensex pack. *—PTI*

Mkts recover after 2 days of fall; Sensex up 535.24 pts

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Tuesday after two straight days of steep decline driven by intense buying in banking and rate-sensitive stocks as the RBI decided to inject liquidity into the financial system.

The 30-share Sensex climbed 535.24 points or 0.71 per cent to settle at 75,901.41. During the day, the benchmark surged 1,146.79 points or 1.52 per cent to hit a high of 76,512.96.

The broader 50-share NSE Nifty appreciated by 128.10 points or 0.56 per cent to close at 22,957.25. In the intraday session, the 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 308.8 points or 1.35 per cent to 23,137.95.

Among the Sensex shares, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Zomato, IndusInd Bank, Maruti Suzuki India and Bharti Airtel were the major gainers.

Sun Pharmaceutical, Larsen & Toubro, ITC, HCL Technologies, NTPC, Power Grid, Nestle India, Tata Consultancy Services, and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

The broader 50-share NSE Nifty appreciated by 128.10 points or 0.56 per cent to close at 22,957.25 **PHOTO: X**

Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC stock plunges nearly 9%

Shares of Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC plunged nearly 9 per cent in the mid-session deals on Tuesday after the company's December quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. The scrip of the company declined 8.77 per cent to Rs 587 apiece on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). *—PTI*

Mohan Yadav **PHOTO: X**

MP CM Yadav invites Japanese investments

TOKYO, 28 JAN

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that the state has exported goods spanning multiple industries worth USD 92.8 million to Japan in 2023-24 on Tuesday, while inviting business leaders to explore investment opportunities in the state.

Yadav was speaking during an interactive session on investment opportunities in Madhya Pradesh being held in the Indian Embassy. He is on a four-day visit to Japan and will be visiting Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe between 28 and 31 January as he aims to highlight Madhya Pradesh's potential to investors and extend an invitation for the upcoming Global Investor Summit in the state.

Citing the USD 92.8 million worth of exports from the state, he referred to the longstanding relations between Madhya Pradesh and Japan and expressed hope to receive significant investments from the country.

The state is already attracting big-ticket investments across industries and there is abundant availability of skilled youth, Yadav added, saying that his government aims to double the growth of the economy in the next five years.

The Madhya Pradesh Global Investors Summit (GIS) 2025 is scheduled to be held in the state capital Bhopal on 24-25 February, 2025. *—PTI*

Boeing posts $3.8 billion loss

WASHINGTON, 28 JAN

Boeing posted a fourth-quarter loss of USD 3.8 billion on Tuesday as a machinists strike and other problems continued to plague the troubled aircraft manufacturer.

Boeing has lost more than USD 35 billion since 2019 following the crashes of two then-new Max jets that killed 346 people.

The numbers Boeing released are in line with what the company pre-reported last week, including nearly USD 3 billion worth of charges in the period due to the labour stoppage, job cuts and problems with a number of government programmes.

Boeing's loss per share was USD 5.46 per share, well above the USD 3.08 loss that Wall Street analysts expected, according to the data firm FactSet.

PHOTO: PTI

The fourth quarter caps a rough year for Boeing. A strike by the machinists who assemble the best-selling 737 Max, along with the 777 jet and the 767 cargo plane at factories in Renton and Everett, Washington, halted production at those facilities and hampered Boeing's delivery capability.

The walkout ended after more than seven weeks when the company agreed to pay raises and improved benefits. *—PTI*

SL, Adani to renegotiate wind power purchase

COLOMBO, 28 JAN

The Sri Lanka government will renegotiate the power purchasing agreement with Adani Green Energy for a 484 MW wind power project to bring the cost under USD 0.06 per unit, an official said on Tuesday.

"We would want it to be below 6 cents US," government spokesman Nalinda Jayathissa told reporters here.

The previous government's decision to sign a 20-year power purchase agreement for the 484MW wind plants at 8.2 cents US was disputed as local bidders had offered lower unit prices.

Jayathissa's NPP had earlier vowed to annul the Adani green energy project.

The new government in December decided not to sign an agreement at the purchase prices agreed by the previous government in 2023.

The government refuted news reports that the Adani Green Energy projects in the northeastern regions of Mannar and Pooneryn projects are to be cancelled. However, the government-appointed committee would review the whole project. Adani Green Energy had also earlier rejected reports that the project had been cancelled. *—PTI*

Nakul Jain quits as Paytm Payments Services CEO

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Nakul Jain, Managing Director and CEO of Paytm Payments Services Ltd (PPSL) has resigned from the company and has decided to pursue an entrepreneurial journey, according to a statutory filing by One 97 Communications.

PPSL is actively working on identifying a suitable replacement and will announce the new appointment in due course, the filing said adding that in the interim, the company remains focused on driving growth and continuing to meet its business objectives.

"We wish to inform you that Paytm Payments Services Ltd (PPSL) our wholly-owned material subsidiary company has informed us..that Nakul Jain, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of PPSL, has resigned from his position w.e.f. close of business hours on 31 March, 2025, or an earlier mutually agreed date," it said.

Nakul Jain **PHOTO: X**

Jain has decided to pursue an entrepreneurial journey, which has prompted the decision. "As informed on 28 August, 2024, PPSL received approval from the Government of India, Ministry of Finance, Department of Financial Services, via its letter dated 27 August, 2024, for downstream investment from the Company into PPSL," the filing said. Post the FDI approval, PPSL has resubmitted its payment aggregator (PA) application. *—PTI*

INDIA-INDONESIA TRADE TO RISE BY 4-FOLD: BIZ PANEL

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Bilateral trade between India and Indonesia, which is around USD 30 billion, could quadruple in a decade, Anindya Bakrie Chair of the Indonesia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KADIN), said and expressed hope that both countries could grow together and serve the world effectively.

The CEO of Bakrie and Brothers, which focuses on manufacturing and infrastructure sector, emphasised that the historical cultural ties between the two nations aid in deepening trade and investment relations.

"The relationship is at an all-time high. it could quadruple in 10 years if managed correctly," Bakrie, who was part of the Indonesian presidential delegation meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss trade relations, told PTI. *—PTI*

AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS

SpiceJet to reintroduce grounded Boeing 737 Max Fleet

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

Domestic budget carrier SpiceJet on Tuesday said it is set to re-induct one of its grounded Boeing 737 Max aircraft into operations from 29 January, as part of its plan to put all these planes back into service in a phased manner.

The first such plane is set to be deployed on high-demand markets such as Jeddah and Riyadh, starting Wednesday, it said.

Grounded for several months, the aircraft's return marks a significant milestone in the airline's fleet restoration and operational enhancement efforts, SpiceJet said in a statement.

Under its ongoing fleet restoration plan, the airline aims to bring ten aircraft, including four Boeing 737 MAX planes,

PHOTO: SPICEJET

back into service by mid-April and this is the first 737 MAX aircraft to be brought back under the exercise, it said.

In addition to this, SpiceJet said it has since October last year added 10 aircraft to its fleet, comprising three previously grounded planes and seven newly-leased aircraft.

This has enabled the airline to expand its network with over 60 new flights introduced in the last three months, further enhancing connectivity and offering passengers more travel options, SpiceJet said.

To facilitate the restoration of its Boeing MAX fleet, SpiceJet recently entered into services agreements with US-based engine MRO provider StandardAero Inc and the original equipment manufacturer for LEAP-1B engines, and CFM International, Inc. *—PTI*

Mumbai names squad for Ranji Trophy

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

Defending champions Mumbai have announced a 16-member squad to face Meghalaya in a crucial Ranji Trophy Elite Group A match starting Thursday, notably without India stars Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal, and Shreyas Iyer. The trio has joined the national team in preparation for the ODI series against England, set to commence on 6 February. Mumbai, coming off a five-wicket defeat to Jammu and Kashmir, must secure a significant win against Meghalaya, preferably with a bonus point, to keep their title hopes alive. Ajinkya Rahane leads the side, which sees the return of Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Suryansh Shedge, and Atharva Ankolekar, while Karsh Kothari is omitted. Additionally, Mumbai will be reliant on Baroda to defeat table-toppers Jammu and Kashmir to assist their chances —*PTI*

NZ's Kerr is ICC women's cricketer of the year

DUBAI, 28 JAN

New Zealand all-rounder Melie Kerr has etched her name in history by becoming the first Kiwi recipient of the prestigious Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy, awarded as the ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year for 2024. The 24-year-old surpassed renowned players such as Laura Wolvaardt, Chamari Athapaththu, and Annabel Sutherland to secure this top honour.

Throughout the year, Kerr showcased her prowess as a world-class all-rounder, excelling in both bowling and batting. Her exceptional fielding and leg-spin bowling made her a vital asset for the White Ferns, while her batting was instrumental in stabilising the team. Since its inception in 2017, the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy has previously been awarded to just three players: Ellyse Perry, Smriti Mandhana, and Nat Sciver-Brunt, each winning it twice. —*PTI*

3 Indian boxers to compete at Super Fighter Series

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Tamil Nadu's professional boxer, Sabari Jaishankar, is set to headline the Super Fighter Series, an international boxing event scheduled for 7 February in Bangkok. Joining him will be compatriots Laldinsanga and Vanlalawmpuia from Mizoram. Organised by Crown Boxing Promotions and Grassroot Boxing Promotions, this event showcases international talent from countries including the USA, France, Belarus, Ukraine, and Thailand. Jaishankar, who currently holds the WBC Middle East and WBC Australasia titles, will face off against experienced Thai boxer Rattakorn Tassaworn. Meanwhile, Laldinsanga, a WBC Youth World title champion, is pitted against Sarawut Jiamthong, and Vanlalawmpuia will clash with Supachat Sukonthamanee in what promises to be a thrilling encounter. All three aim to make their mark on the international stage.—*PTI*

Ex-Premier League referee Coote comes out as gay

LONDON, 28 JAN

Former Premier League referee David Coote has publicly come out as gay, revealing that concealing his sexuality contributed to his controversial dismissal in December. Coote, who was suspended after offensive remarks about Jürgen Klopp surfaced, expressed regret over his behaviour, stating that hiding his emotions led to poor decisions. In an interview with The Sun, he acknowledged the impact of relentless abuse on officials, sharing that he received death threats linked to his refereeing decisions. Coote also addressed struggles with substance use as an escape from the pressure of his role, emphasising the emotional toll on referees. —*PTI*

National Games kick off with vibrant opening ceremony

Around 25,000 people packed Rajiv Gandhi Cricket Stadium

DEHRADUN, 28 JAN

A modest but colourful opening ceremony showcasing Uttarakhand's religious heritage and bio-diversity kicked off the 38th National Games here on Tuesday with guest of honour Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterating his commitment to bring the 2036 Olympics to India during his address.

Around 10,000 athletes are gearing up to compete for podium finishes across 32 disciplines in the Games that will run till 14 February. Events will be held across seven cities of the hill state with Dehradun being the main venue.

Around 450 gold medals, and a similar number of silver and bronze medals are at stake.

Modi declared the Games open after the teams marched in and he was presented the flame at the ceremony.

"It is our endeavour to enhance your capabilities and we are focussed on supporting you. We consider sports an essential aspect in development of country," Modi told the gathered athletes at the ceremony.

"It is a beautiful portrait of 'Ek Bharat, Sreshth Bharat'," Modi said referring to the Games.

Artists perform during the opening ceremony of 38th National Games, in Uttarakhand on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

The Prime Minister also used the opportunity to pass some health tips, urging youngsters to fight the growing menace of obesity by cutting down the oil in their food and adding more walks and exercise to their daily routines.

The ceremony started with a performance of 'Tandav', a classical dance form that is an ode to Lord Shiva. The Games were declared open with blowing of 2025 conches to mark the year.

Local favourite and popular Bollywood singer Jubin Nautiyal also performed during the ceremony. Earlier, Modi arrived at the stadium riding on a decked-up golf cart along with Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami. An estimated 25,000 spectators packed the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium despite the chilly weather to catch the ceremony live. —*PTI*

Kohli declines Delhi captaincy on Ranji return

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Star Indian batsman Virat Kohli has officially resumed training with the Delhi team, marking his highly anticipated return to the Ranji Trophy after a 12-year absence. Kohli, who last played in the domestic event in 2012, will participate in the match against Railways starting 30 January at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

Despite being approached by the Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) to captain the team, Kohli declined, opting instead to support young Ayush Badoni as captain. A DDCA source revealed, "We asked Virat if he would be willing to take up the captaincy... however, he refused, saying, 'Let Ayush Badoni continue. I don't want to lead.'" Kohli's decision reflects his commitment to nurturing the next generation of players.

Kohli, who participated in practice arrived at the training ground at 9am, engaging in warm-up exercises and football. His participation comes after the BCCI encouraged international stars to prioritise domestic cricket. In related news, KL Rahul has been included in Karnataka's squad for their crucial fixture against Haryana, marking his return after recovering from injury. Meanwhile, Riyan Parag is set to captain Assam against Saurashtra after overcoming a shoulder injury. The Ranji Trophy matches conclude on 2 February, just days before India faces England in a three-match ODI series. —*PTI*

Saudi club Al-Hilal, Neymar part ways

RIO DE JANEIRO, 28 JAN

Saudi Arabia club Al-Hilal said it reached an agreement with striker Neymar to terminate his contract by mutual consent.

Neither side confirmed details of the termination after the 32-year-old Brazilian, once hailed as one of the world's best players, played only seven matches for the club, with only one goal and two assists.

Despite being sidelined since October 2023 due to an ACL injury, former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star Neymar was part of the squad that won last season's Saudi league.

Their deal was due to expire after Al-Hilal's participation in this year's FIFA Club World Cup, which will be played between June 15 and July 13 in the United States.

The striker joined the Saudi club from Paris Saint-Germain in August 2023 for 90 million euros (USD 94 million), in one of many transactions that placed the Arab country as one of the new big soccer markets in the world. But Neymar picked up his ACL injury, the most serious of his career, playing for Brazil only months after he joined Al-Hilal. Neymar returned in October and had his most recent appearance for the Saudi club in November. The Brazilian said in different interviews there were doubts on whether coach Jorge Jesus would count on him for the rest of the season. —*PTI*

ANOTHER FEATHER TO THE CAP

Bumrah named ICC men's Cricketer of the Year

DUBAI, 28 JAN

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Tuesday won the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC men's Cricketer of the Year after delivering "a master-class in skill, precision, and relentless consistency" across formats in a record-shattering 2024.

The 31-year-old was adjudged the ICC's Test Cricketer of the Year on Monday and was also named in the Test Team of the Year last week.

"Jasprit Bumrah has been honoured with the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year at the ICC Awards, recognising his extraordinary 2024, in which he dominated opponents in the longest as well as the shortest format of the game," the ICC said.

Bumrah was also named ICC men's Test Cricketer of the Year for excelling in both home and away conditions *PHOTO: PTI*

Bumrah played a key role across formats for India as he became the fifth winner of the award from the country after Rahul Dravid (2004), Sachin Tendulkar (2010), Ravichandran Ashwin (2016) and Virat Kohli (2017, 2018).

Bumrah had a stellar year 2024 in which he played a decisive role for India with 15 wickets in their title-winning campaign in the T20 World Cup in the Americas and also became the fastest Indian pacer to reach 200 Test wickets with a bowling average of sub-20, which is also the best in history. Overall, Bumrah claimed 77 wickets in the World Test Championship points table for India but the two-time finalists failed to make a third appearance in the summit clash for the 2023-25 cycle. —*PTI*

Pune United pickleball team *PHOTO: X/@WPBLOFFICIAL*

World Pickleball League: Mumbai sweeps Hyderabad

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

Mumbai Pickle Power continued their unbeaten run with a commanding 5-0 victory over Hyderabad Superstars, while Pune United edged past Bengaluru Jawans in a nail-biting 3-2 thriller to register their first win of the season in the World Pickleball League here.

Mumbai's dominance began in the men's singles, where Brandon Lane narrowly defeat Hyderabad's Max Freeman 19-17, maintaining his flawless record. Mihae Kwon asserted Mumbai's power with a powerful 11-8 victory in the women's singles.

Taking a decisive 14-8 win in the mixed doubles. Mumbai mounted a stunning comeback to take a nail biting 15-14 victory in the men's doubles, while the clinching a 9-7 win in the women's doubles. Mumbai's flawless performance cemented their status as title contenders. In a more closely contested tie, Pune United delivered a gritty 3-2 victory over Bengaluru Jawans.

Pune's 17-year-old Mateusz Matysik demonstrated maturity to overcome Bengaluru's Jack Foster 18-15. Bengaluru responded in the women's doubles, taking an emphatic 28-6 victory but Pune took the men's double's 13-8. Bengaluru fought back with Katerina Stewart taking an emphatic 22-13 victory in the women's singles. Pune triumphantly won the deciding mixed doubles clash 20-8. —*PTI*

RELEGATION BATTLE HEATS UP AS VENEZIA, VERONA DRAW

VERONA, 28 JAN

Venezia and Verona were still looking for their first win of the year after the relegation-threatened clubs drew 1-1 in Serie A.

Venezia wing Alessio Zerbin on Monday scored in his first start since joining last year on loan from Napoli. Zerbin's initial shot in the 28th minute was blocked but he swept home the rebound. Cameroon international Jackson Tchatchoua equalized for the visitor with 14 minutes remaining when he tapped in from close range to finish off a quick counterattack down the right.

Verona was fourth from bottom, while Venezia remained second to last, three points ahead of Monza, which missed a chance to move off the bottom by losing at Genoa 2-0.

It could have been worse for visiting Monza but for inspired goalkeeping by Stefano Turati, who notably saved a first half penalty from Andrea Pinamonti. Turati however could not prevent Genoa from making its superiority count in the second half. —*PTI*

Lyon coach Pierre Sage fired despite good results

LYON, 28 JAN

Lyon coach Pierre Sage was fired. His dismissal follows the French league club's a 1-1 draw with Nantes over the weekend leaving some observers baffled. Sage had rapidly become a fans' favorite after guiding Lyon from the bottom of the standings to a sixth-place finish last season.

After 19 matches this season, Lyon is sixth in the league, just four points off a Champions League spot. The club, however, said the decision to part ways with Sage was a "sporting choice." Lyon is owned by American businessman John Textor, who visited the club in person this week.

The seven-time French champions added that his firing "does not call into question the tremendous work carried out at the beginning of 2024, for which Olympique Lyonnais will always be grateful to Pierre Sage and his team." —*PTI*

DE VILLIERS TO RETURN TO CRICKET

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Cricketing fans worldwide are set to celebrate as South African icon AB de Villiers announces his long-awaited return to the sport after nearly four years.

De Villiers, revered as one of the most innovative and electrifying cricketers of all time, will lead the Game Changers South Africa Champions in the second edition of the World Championship of Legends.

De Villiers said, "Four years ago, I retired from all cricket because I just didn't feel the urge to play anymore. We've been playing more and more often in the garden, and, well, it feels as though some kind of flame has been lit again." —*ANI*

CRITICISM OF CAPTAINCY

Rohit files plaint against Gavaskar

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

India's Test captain Rohit Sharma had a challenging tour of Australia during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy (BGT) 2024-25, struggling with the bat and his leadership. Despite joining the squad for the second Test after missing the first due to paternity leave, Sharma's performance fell short, and India's series performance, despite a win in Perth under Jasprit Bumrah's leadership, took a downward turn.

Sharma managed just 31 runs across three Test matches, averaging a mere 6.00. This led Gavaskar to criticise Sharma's approach both as a batsman and as a captain.

Rohit Sharma; Sunil Gavaskar *PHOTO: PTI*

Sharma also came under fire for his absence from the Sydney Test, casting doubts over his future in red-ball cricket. He however, suggested that it might be time for someone else to take over the captaincy for the team's betterment.

He reportedly approached the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to lodge a formal complaint against Gavaskar. On his performance, Sharma also mentioned that external circumstances had impacted it , leading to his underwhelming and poor show during the tour. —*Agencies*

Trisha Gongadi scores first-ever century in U-19 Women's World Cup history

KUALA LUMPUR, 28 JAN

Opener Trisha Gongadi etched her name in the record books by scoring the first ever century in women's U-19 T20 World Cup, powering India into the semifinals with a 150-run victory over Scotland.

Trisha, who won the player of the match, slammed 110 not out off just 59 balls with the help of 13 boundaries and four maximums after India were sent in to bat by Scotland. She was supported by fellow opener and wicketkeeper Kamalini G (51 off 42 balls) and Sanika Chalke, who remained unbeaten on 29 off 20 balls as India scored 208 for 1 in 20 overs.

In reply, Scotland cut a sorry figure and were bowled out for 58 in 14 overs.

Trisha Gongadi

Left-arm orthodox spinner Ayushi Shukla was the star for India with the ball returning with figures of 4 for 8, while left-armer Vaishnavi Sharma (3/5) and Trisha (3/6), after her exploits with the bat, also performed with the ball in hand. Trisha, who hails from Telangana, has been in form in the tournament and notched up two 40-plus scores before the big knock on Tuesday.

India is set to face England in the first semifinal on 31 January. —*PTI*